COMMONWEAL

$2.00 July 14, 1995

THE NEW NATIONALISM AND THE GOSPEL WITNESS
Vigen Guroian

Alan Wolfe on American Democracy

THE SYNAGOGUE AT LIPTOVSKY MIKULAS
Milton Goldin

Alberto Huerta on THE MANY LIVES OF GRAHAM GREENE

Richard Alleva on 'The Bridges of Madison County'

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BOOKS

ROBERT SCHMUHL on 'The American Journey of Eric Sevareid' by Raymond A. Schroth

DANIEL J. MORRISSEY on 'Overcoming Law' by Richard Posner & 'Judicial Power and American Character' by Robert Nagel

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CORRESPONDENCE

There'll always be....

Palo Alto, Calif.

To the Editors: No doubt your recent comments about the beauty and mystery of British postal addresses ["Et Cetera," June 2] will open the floodgates. Let me try to beat the rush by sharing the address my family and I had during a sabbatical leave in Scotland a couple of decades ago. It went:

Windrush
Lade Braes Walk
St. Andrews
Fife
Scotland

One correspondent said it suggested to him that the post was delivered by hummingbird.

During a similar search for housing at Oxford even earlier, I came very close to closing a deal to live at 5, Folly Bridge, but another American beat us out. This loss was made endurable by the fact that the bus stop for our flat in North Oxford was Squitchy Lane.

ROBERT McAFEE BROWN

Poppycock!

Fraser, Mich.

To the Editors: As an Irish Catholic and long-time reader of *Commonweal*, as a so-called "white male" from a "Joe Six-Pack" environment (who nevertheless has degrees from several universities), and, chiefly, as the uncle of seven little "white boys" who are "affirmative action" targets—unlike the children of the "elite" from whence your tired voice emanates, as evidenced in the editorial "Action Still Needed" [June 2]—I say this: Poppycock!

You sound like the O.J. Simpson defense team in your assertion that "there is precious little evidence that reverse discrimination exists." The Supreme Court has had no difficulty finding it. You speak of "old-boy networks," when the proper term would be "rich boy/girl networks."

Your argument has all the convoluted rhetoric of prochoicers'. Murder is murder, and discrimination is discrimination. You speak of the "rightful place" of African-Americans in society. Where might that be? Alongside you and yours? I doubt your largesse extends quite that far.

PAUL BRADLEY

The editors reply: First, if the elite is made up of rich boys and girls, we're out of it. Second, we probably should have qualified our reference to reverse discrimination by saying that there is *no* evidence that it exists on a scale remotely comparable to the disabilities visited upon African-Americans by law for centuries and by society even now.

Finally, the issue at hand has to do not with "largesse" but with fairness; despite certain flaws in existing affirmative-action programs, some of them are still needed to give African-Americans the means to achieve their rightful place in American society—which is, yes, right alongside the rest of us.

Read the book

Catonsville, Md.

To the Editors: I write to correct inaccuracies, misstatements, and libelous blunders made by Paul Elie in his review of my book, *Congregation* ["Reporters in the House of the Lord," May 19].

Contrary to what Mr. Elie assumes, I am not a "typical" journalist who is forced into "deadlines" by any publication or publisher. I am not "semiliterate" in religious affairs, as he states. His remark that I and other journalists who have written books about church life "have set themselves up on the road to Damascus with nothing to guide them but last week's magazines" is based on nothing but his own imaginings. To say that we "find Christianity is more complicated than [we] had supposed" is also incorrect; to say we "don't have the inclination to undertake ongoing training in Christianity" is another harsh assumption that is without any basis in reality. More specifically, to say that I am a person "who is unfamiliar with the hard sociological explanations for why people go to church and who is wary of the religious ones" is simply untrue.

The truth is I spent five years working almost exclusively on *Congregation*, though I was at the First Church in Windsor, Connecticut, as an observer for only about a third of that time. In fact, I was often so busy writing and researching the topic outside the confines of First Church, I pushed my "deadline" almost three years beyond my contractual arrangement with Viking Press.

The truth is, too, that when I began my research in 1989, I realized that Christianity, even at the most local level at a mainline church, could become a very complex subject. Therefore, as I set out searching for a church to write about, I also went directly to the office of Professor William McKinney, dean of the Hartford Seminary and one of the nation's experts on main-

(Continued on page 26)

CORRECTION: Because of a transcription error, reviewer Gene H. Bell-Villada's name was misspelled on the cover and contents page of the June 16 issue. Our apologies.

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COMMONWEAL

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Why Bosnia matters

"I don't give two cents about Bosnia. Not two cents. The people there have brought on their own troubles" (*New York Times*, June 7, 1995). Probably no one has been as blunt about the war in Bosnia as columnist Thomas Friedman, but his sentiments are widely echoed in the press and in Washington. Though the United States has supported a narrow range of policies in Bosnia (sometimes at cross-purposes with one another, sometimes shifting on a daily basis), neither the president nor the secretaries of state and defense have set forth a consistent argument defending those policies or framing a clear statement of the real interests lurking behind them. The Bosnian government has the general support of the United States—that is, until conditions require a decisive move, usually military, at which point Bill Clinton shifts into neutral. The Congress—particularly in the person of Senator Robert Dole (R-Kans.) who appears more interested in checkmating Mr. Clinton than in stopping such aggression—carries on a campaign of partisan posturing that undercuts administration policy whenever it seems to be on the verge of achieving some consistency and coherence.

What are United States interests in Bosnia?

The United States has a vital interest in helping the United Nations to develop a competent and respected peace-keeping capability, especially since we will never again possess the hegemony conferred by the cold war. The end of the U.S.-Soviet "*Pax Romana*" will certainly encourage the eruption of many more local wars. It is in our national interest that they be contained and resolved quickly.

We have a vital interest in maintaining NATO's military capabilities; not only maintaining them, but being seen to maintain them. NATO is now the designated mechanism for drawing together, over time, the military forces of Eastern Europe and ultimately Russia into a coordinated and cooperative framework for keeping the peace over that huge landmass. To accomplish that, NATO's credibility and vitality must remain intact.

Both the UN and NATO have been seriously compromised in the former Yugoslavia; the end game there will very likely set the future agenda, enhanced or diminished, for both organizations. In that sense, we have interests in the outcome of the war in Bosnia. But Bosnia presents its own humanitarian and political interests to the United States. The president has not been wrong to press the case of the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, democratic Bosnian government over the ethnic nationalism and autocratic regime of Radovan Karadzic in Pale. Even more, the continuing siege by the Bosnian Serbs of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Gorzade, and other Bosnian enclaves is a violation of every moral and political declaration of human rights, which the United States along with many other nations has agreed to defend.

It is often argued that neither the UN nor NATO could have been effective in

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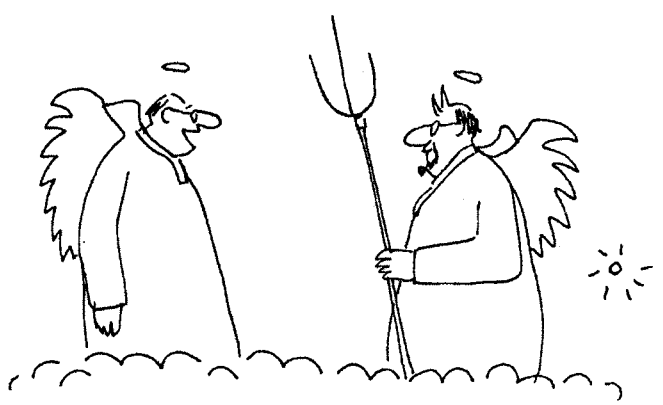
Bosnia, ever, because the Europeans themselves could not agree on anything except to contain the fighting and provide relief; hence their willingness to use and abuse the UN and to cobble a UN peace-keeping mission together with an arrangement for surveillance and air cover by NATO. But European indecision need not have been decisive. True, the UN mandate was limited, but early UN concessions to the Bosnian Serbs and the continuing countenance by UN officials of Serbian lies, thuggery, and violations of human rights have unduly drawn the limits ever tighter. No doubt Yasushi Akashi, the civilian head of the UN mission, has a tough job, but his appeasement of the Bosnian Serbs makes the conditions worse by prolonging the intolerable conditions under which Bosnians in Sarajevo and other enclaves must live. Instances where UN forces resisted, thwarted, or fought off Serbian aggression led the Serbs to back down. Unfortunately, Mr. Akashi never allowed enough of these restrained uses of military force. If the UN is to save its mission, this policy needs to change.

The rapid reaction force of some 10,000 combat soldiers scheduled to arrive in Bosnia this month can be an instrument of that change. The chances that it can work to bring peace are good, if it is allowed to function as a military force. It is worth risking failure (and casualties) to do so.

What can it do? The rapid reaction forces can protect the UN troops already there from being abused by the Bosnian Serbs. Through selective military responses, it can end the shelling and siege of Sarajevo and other enclaves. It can open the roads and airports so that a normal flow of food and supplies can reach Bosnia. But with the UN's own policy on the rapid reaction force still in flux, it is also entirely possible that its military capacities will be used only to extract the UN troops already there preparatory to a complete UN pull-out. If that proves the unfortunate end to UN efforts, then the arms embargo should be lifted and the Bosnian government allowed to acquire the weapons needed to defend itself.

A U.S. policy favoring the Bosnians should be defended by the president and supported by the Congress. Whether with the rapid reaction force or with the Bosnian government, the United States should vigorously support efforts to lift the siege of Sarajevo and help to piece back together a contiguous territory so that the Bosnian government can come to the bargaining table free of a Serbian *diktat*. The Bosnians have previously agreed to a division of territory that, while conceding more than half of Bosnia to the Serbs, will also allow the Bosnians to establish an independent and viable country.

The United States has a vital political and moral interest in peace making and peace keeping, in the short run and the long term. Today, that interest is challenged not simply by the war in Bosnia, but by the failure, thus far, of collective measures and mechanisms to bring the warring parties in Bosnia to a sustainable peace agreement. Tomorrow, that interest will be challenged somewhere else. The processes, procedures, and levels of cooperation that help, or fail to help, resolve the war in Bosnia, will have an enormous impact on sustaining peace—or fomenting war—everywhere.



"In your earthly life, I understand you were a politician who always managed to hedge the issues."

NOTEBOOK

WORD MAESTRO AT PLAY

RESTODMARWAYLPOTA!

On my home computer I have this program called WordZap, described by its makers as "An Addictionary Game." It is that. My wife and toddler wish to destroy the game, or, failing that, the computer. I need a twelve-step program.

The game starts. In the left half of the screen you see two tiers of four blank squares, and below them a single rectangle with the word "Ready?"; in the right half, seven tiers of five blank blocks. Using the mouse, you move the cursor to "Ready," click once, and the left-hand tiers instantly fill up with letters. You click on one after another of these letters, which then appear in the right-hand tiers, starting at the bottom. If you make a real word—i.e., one that the game allows—you start on the next tier.

You move fast because meantime an invisible opponent is also making words (though you can't see them till the game is over). I picture the enemy as an ugly green Cookie Monster with sixteen fingers. Once in a while, following rules I don't grasp, the monster "zaps" one of your hard-won words; once in a longer while, one of your words "zaps" one of his, hers, or its. If you fill out the seventh or top tier first, the screen says: "Congratulations! You won!" Otherwise, it says: "Sorry, you lost." It is programmed to be sincere.

Scoffers will say the game is too easy because it allows three-letter words, unlike the syndicated version of Scrabble, which you can't win unless you descramble at least a couple of five seven-letter jumbles. Ah, but Scrabble's rules allow twenty *minutes* and can't be enforced; WordZap is over, win or lose, no

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appeal, in as little as forty-five *seconds*—though it slows down when there just aren't that many possible words in the letters it gives you.

Is it fun? It makes you taut. After a while my left shoulder aches. My eyes water. Bills don't get paid. I don't want to answer the phone, eat, go to the head or bed. The toddler knocks unavailingly on the door. Cocktail hour can break the spell, but I can always bring a drink back to the Game.

Are there benefits? Possibly. My prose style can lean to polysyllabificationism; focusing on three- to five-letter words resists the trend. (For proof, study this piece.) My fingers are getting more agile. I train my head to recall helpful tricks to make quickest use of the letters offered. For example, I see myself in a poker game, where I *opt* to *top* the *pot*; or I am riding in a car driven by Pat, who is dozing off: an *apt* moment to *tap Pat*. I look around; my *study* is *dusty*. This *item* takes a mere *mite* of *time*. *Hate* is a form of *heat*. Heat *what* and it will *thaw*. Stop me! (Note: *stop* = *post*.)

The Game makes you think deeply about the flaws of English. William Safire says there are 650,000 words in the language. It's not enough; not when you're stuck at the sixth tier, you know the Cookie Monster is gaining, and you can't put together another word. You could win if you could click out the word *yowk*, a useful term to be yelled at your spouse to warn in a syllable of a unique and complex situation—the toddler is about to fall off the kitchen table. Hearing *yowk*!, the spouse can leap before looking.

Another word asking to be born is *feksch*, an adjective expressing the whole gamut of emotions felt by a committed smoker who finds him/herself out of cigarettes two minutes after all the stores close for the night and there's a Notebook to be written. *Sheepish* can't cut it: too long, doesn't begin to convey the intensity of self-contempt for one's addiction, or of the rage over forgetting to feed it, or of the desperate yearning for some nice poisonous tar and nicotine. We need this word, if only to save space and beat the Game.

Along with pain, WordZap provides small pleasures. Win four or five games in a row, and the screen says, "You have been promoted to Word Ace!" A few more, and you are a "Word Hero!" Win some tough ones and you may even be a "Word Maestro!" This grants me courage to enter editorial discussions here in the office; the others at the table may be younger, smarter, better read, and harder working, but they are not certified Word Maestros.

And one can play games with the Game. I dream of the day when I press "Ready?" and these letters appear:

LIMB

AUGH

I will respond: *UGH, BUM, LUG, BAH, HUM, BUG*, and, finally (seventh word), *LAUGH*. This gives me a Rush.

ROBERT G. HOYT

In keeping with *Commonweal*'s usual schedule, only one issue is published each month during July and August. The next issue will be dated August 18.

A friend passes

At the annual meeting of the Catholic Press Association in Los Angeles last month came word that our friend, Sister Martha Mary McGaw, C.S.J., had died at the age of eighty. Sister Martha, a native of Sedalia, Missouri, was co-editor of *The Sooner Catholic* of Oklahoma City and a warm friend of *Commonweal*. She was a most versatile editor, reporter, photographer, columnist—"the best combination of writer and photographer in the American Catholic press." In her immediate, on-the-spot reports of newsworthy happenings all over Oklahoma she continuously showed what a lively diocesan paper could provide its readers. She approached her work and her grateful public in a blithe and confident spirit. Timely as it was, her contribution to Catholic journalism will long endure. May she rest in peace.

EDWARD S. SKILLIN

REPORT ON 'UT UNUM SINT'

JOHN PAUL II, ECUMENIST
ASKS PRAYERS FOR HIS OWN CONVERSION

Future historians, asked to name John Paul II's most influential achievement, would surely have pointed to his role in dismantling the late Soviet empire. But now, following the publication of his new encyclical, *Ut unum sint* ("That They May Be One," *see*, *Origins*, June 8), there is another choice for their consideration. The encyclical may mark the beginning of the end of Christianity's thousand-year division.

John Paul reminds his readers that the Roman Catholic church committed itself to ecumenism "irrevocably" at Vatican II. As if to show how much of the council's vision still goes unrealized, however, he takes most of his quotations in *Ut unum sint* from Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism* (1964). He writes with a sense of urgency "to encourage the efforts of all who work for the cause of unity." While much of this essentially pastoral encyclical is taken for granted in ecumenical circles, its truths have not permeated the Roman church's everyday consciousness. John Paul is determined that they do so.

No disciple, he argues, can remain indifferent to ecumenism: "To believe in Christ means to desire unity; to desire unity means to desire the church; to desire the church means to desire the communion of grace which corresponds to the Father's plan from all eternity." Every Christian can and must work for unity by prayer, both individual and common, by conversion, and by "every possible form of practical cooperation at all levels."

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Though he does not quote it, John Paul makes his own the famous question of the Third World Conference on Faith and Order (Lund, 1952): "Should not our churches ask themselves...whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?"

The goal of the ecumenical movement, writes John Paul, is the full communion of faith and life that is realized and celebrated in sharing the Eucharist. Ecumenism is intrinsic to the essence and mission of the church. The church of Christ cannot be a sign and sacrament of unity, as Vatican II said it was, as long as it remains divided. To the extent that Christians are walled off from one another in their own denominations, the gospel of unity is not credible. Unity does not mean uniformity. It does not require that every church and every Christian use the same formulae to profess the one faith: "The expression of truth can take different forms."

Near the end of his letter, however, John Paul goes beyond the conventional to extend an epoch-making invitation: "Could not the real but imperfect communion existing between [*sic*] us persuade church leaders and their theologians to engage with me in a patient and fraternal dialogue on this subject [of the primacy of the bishop of Rome]...?" He cites ecumenical agreements that indicate that the authority of the bishop of Rome is not the real obstacle to reunion, but rather the way that authority has been exercised. So John Paul asks forgiveness of other Christians, acknowledges their "painful recollections," and says that to make his own ministry "a service of love recognized by all concerned" is an "immense task" which "I cannot carry out by myself." Thus, his unprecedented and revolutionary invitation in the encyclical to a dialogue aimed at the reform of his own ministry.

How can this extraordinary encyclical be squared with those documents, decisions, and appointments that have deeply troubled ecumenists during the seventeen years since John Paul II's election? For instance, it took the Vatican over ten years to respond to the 1982 *Final Report* of the first Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. When a response finally came, it seemed to repudiate the commission's method, which John Paul himself had commended, and to require Anglicans to accept Roman Catholic doctrinal formulations. Ecumenical leaders saw the 1992 letter on the church as communion, which John Paul formally approved, as a new version of the "ecumenism of return," where unity is achieved by absorption of the other Christian churches back into Roman Catholicism. His encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, written *to* the bishops and not *with* them, seemed to narrow the church's teaching authority to himself. Many have been troubled by the choice of bishops (in Switzerland, the Netherlands, Austria, El Salvador, the United States), selected apparently more for their theological conformity than for their ability to represent and nurture the faith of their people.

John Paul's dramatic invitation may have been prompted by the imminence of the year 2000. Late last year he issued *Trente millenio adveniente* ("As the Third Millennium Approaches"), where he said that preparing for the year 2000 had become "a hermeneutical key to my pontificate." The chief purpose of the millennial jubilee, wrote John Paul, is "the strengthening of faith and of the witness of Christians." But that witness is crippled so long as the churches are divided from one another.

Now, apparently, he has decided that action is necessary. Since, as Paul VI said, "The pope, as we well know, is undoubtedly the gravest obstacle in the path of ecumenism," it is obvious where action could be most effective. John Paul's longing for renewed Christian witness in the year 2000 has intensified his commitment to unity. Yet he knows there can be no unity without reform of the office he holds. He asks for help in this essential, monumental task.

He offers a preview of a reformed primacy by speaking of himself only as successor of Peter, bishop of Rome, and, most emphatically, as *servus servorum Dei* ("servant of the servants of God"). Titles like patriarch of the West, Holy Father, Vicar of Christ, and even pope do not appear in this encyclical. The designation "servant of the servants of God," he writes, is "the best possible safeguard against the risk of separating power (and in particular the primacy) from ministry." *Ut unum sint* again and again emphasizes the collaborative, collegial dimension of the office. John Paul highlights conversion as the heart of the ecumenical enterprise, but stresses his own conversion first and foremost. He even asks his fellow Christians to pray for his conversion so that he might carry out his ministry of service.

Although the church of Christ subsists in the Roman Catholic

Other voices

The bulletin *Ecumenical News International* (June 7) reports that reaction to the pope's encyclical has been mixed. Milan Opocensky, general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, said that it is "unthinkable to accept the papacy as a symbol of unity among Christians," that "we need a new kind of ecumenism, which is not linked to this ambiguous institution." Lukas Vischer, a Swiss Reformed theologian and a former director of Faith and Order at the World Council of Churches, questioned whether the pontificate of John Paul II offers a suitable model of service for the church: "Is it not in fact a much more authoritarian and centralizing model? The churches of the Reformation cannot in good conscience associate themselves with the vision of unity propagated by the Catholic church today." However, the initial response of the Church of England said that there was "much in the encyclical with which Anglicans can agree wholeheartedly," and that "this urgent call by the pope to continue along a path which is difficult yet full of joy encourages us to continue with greater determination." And Georges Lemopoulos, executive secretary for church and ecumenical relations at the World Council of Churches, said that the encyclical presented a "powerful image of the pope's ecumenical commitment." J.N.

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church, it needs the other churches, just as they need it. Other churches played an important role in crafting key documents of Vatican II. So also, the indispensable reform of the primacy will not be the accomplishment of the Roman Catholic church alone.

Some will fault the encyclical for overlooking "interchurch" marriages (about which John Paul has been eloquently positive). Others will criticize its unnecessarily gender-specific terms. Still others will wish for a further development of his remarks on the Christian martyrs of the different churches, fully united with Christ and therefore with one another. Yet *Ut unum sint* remains an extraordinary opportunity. If ever there was an ecumenical *kairos*, this is it. JON NILSON

Jon Nilson is associate professor of theology at Loyola University Chicago and serves on the Anglican-Roman Catholic Consultation in the United States.

REPORT ON CONGRESS

KEEP THE 'PUBLIC' IN PBS

OUR LYCEUM OF THE AIRWAVES

Congressional Republican claims that budget cutting and "privatization" are the proper future course for the nation's public broadcasting system are shortsighted. They belie a mistaken philosophy that sees Americans as consumers first and citizens second.

Public broadcasting came into existence as a Great Society initiative in 1967. To correct commercial broadcasting's failure to provide quality programming, Congress chartered the Public Broadcasting Service. As much as anyone, E.B. White articulated public broadcasting's civic commitment. He called for a public broadcasting system that would be "our Lyceum, our Chautauqua, our Minsky's, and our Camelot. It should restate and clarify our social dilemma and the political pickle."

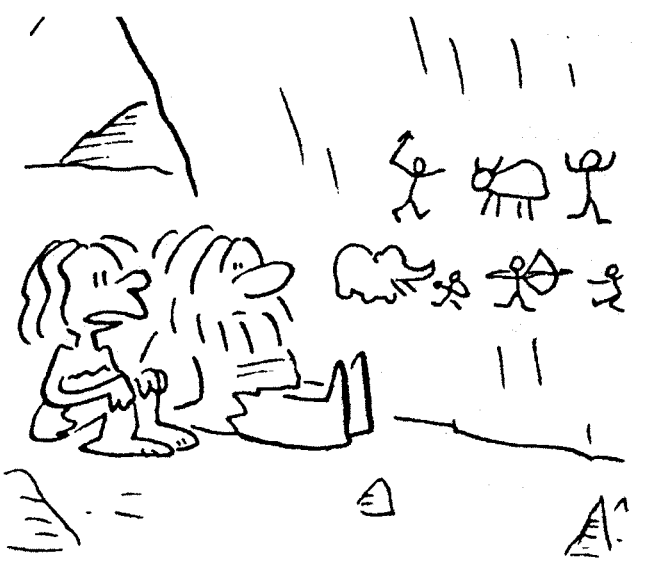
The present Corporation for Public Broadcasting is not a commercial network. It is an administrative clearing house that oversees the distribution of public funds to local stations and programmers, but owns neither. The approximately 350 local public television broadcasters are, in fact, already private, but they are nonprofit corporations which are licensed to meet the public need for noncommercial, educational services. These stations thus constitute a national distribution network under the banner of the well-known Public Broadcasting Service logo. Several PBS stations (in New York, Washington, and Boston) have state-of-the-art facilities and produce nationally syndicated series.

Similarly, National Public Radio is a private, nonprofit system of 520 public radio stations. NPR produces programming, acquires programming from other NPR member stations and independent programmers, and then distributes the programs nationally. NPR also maintains the Public Radio Satellite system, which interconnects public radio stations.

Republican members of the 104th Congress are now advocating severe cuts in funding for public broadcasting while at the same time promoting what they call the "privatization" of public broadcast services. They claim that today's communication technologies can correct the previous market failure to provide quality radio and television programming, and that today's abundant communications facilities enable citizens to make a variety of choices to meet their needs. They argue that the public would be better served with diminished tax-funded support of public broadcasting, and that, ideally, none should be necessary in the future.

The mechanics of privatization have not been well thought-out. At present, only scenarios exist. For example, congressional legislation is anticipated next year enabling commercial exploitation of channels hitherto reserved for noncommercial, educational use. In a separate action, the Federal Communications Commission could authorize the nonprofits to sell their channels for commercial use in the event enough public broadcasters request the commission to do so. But those broadcasters would face extinction and are not likely to adopt such a course in the near term, given ongoing, though reduced, federal funding through 1997.

The opponents of public broadcasting mistake choice for quality. It is true that broadcast, television, satellite, and telephone technologies have opened up hundreds of new channels of communication. But will the public's needs, particularly its informational needs, be adequately met if all these technologies are under commercial control? Up until now, in order to recoup their investments in equipment and production, commercial ventures have committed themselves to mass-market ventures (pay-per-view movies, home shopping, music videos, etc.). With market share as the driving force, programming in the future will likely become even more consumer-oriented than it is now. Entertainment, laced with hard-sell commercials, will take on an even more exaggerated role over public education.



"It's nice, but I wish we had more than one channel."

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The "privatization" of "public" broadcasting now being proposed in Congress is a concept worthy of Orwellian doublespeak. If public broadcasting facilities are forced to sell their frequencies because of a lack of congressional financial support, a number of deleterious effects will follow. First, the public will permanently lose the use of these valued resources. Second, the income from a one-shot infusion of cash from the sale of some licenses will be insufficient for remaining noncommercial broadcasters to meet needed equipment-upgrade and replacement costs in the future, to rent adequate satellite time, or to sustain professional staffs. Over time, variety on the remaining stations will shrivel and innovation will wither, for with fewer public-service broadcasters, the capacity to provide a variety of local programming will be diminished. Finally, a smaller, underfunded public system will constitute but one more competitive programmer in the information marketplace, one forced to seek more and more commercial backing and thus more subject to the same market forces that already assail programming quality in general. The original vision of a public system, à la E.B. White, to operate as a public service for citizens, will be lost to the unrelenting pressures of the market.

By forcing a fire sale of the broadcasting frequencies hitherto reserved for nonprofit educational uses, privatization proponents are paving the way for the cable industry, Hollywood studios, and telephone companies to commercialize segments of what has been public broadcasting. Those who would eviscerate the present system insist that an information infrastructure will remain, and that it will be egalitarian and open. But there is no guarantee that the broad public access now provided by public broadcasting will endure should the present system be scuttled. Setting up e-mail nodes for Congress and federal agencies may prove to be a step toward greater citizen participation, but it should not be seen as an information-age substitute for mass media public broadcasting.

In the hands of congressional Republicans, budget cutting and privatization constitute a double-barreled shotgun aimed at the heart of public broadcasting. Citizens should beware and sound the alarm. HUGH CARTER DONAHUE

Hugh Carter Donahue is the author of The Battle to Control Broadcast News *(MIT Press, 1989).*

OF SEVERAL MINDS Abigail McCarthy

KEEP ON TRUCKIN'

YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO HELP

Having passed a significant birthday not long ago I find myself somewhat preoccupied with two questions. The first is that posed in the title of a memoir by my acquaintance, Chalmers Roberts: *How Did I Get Here So Fast?* The second is: What do I do now?

I have entered territory that is relatively uncharted. I am part of the first generation in recorded history to live so long. The average life expectancy of Americans has increased some thirty years since the beginning of the twentieth century. And those who live far longer than the average are no longer rare. It seems just a few short years since Willard Scott of NBC's "Today Show" began saluting oldsters celebrating their hundredth birthday. Now many of them are apt to be celebrating their 103rd, 104th, even 107th.

There has been little research on the reasons these people lived so long in relative good health, so one has to make do with their own guesses—often contradictory. They drank or they didn't drink; they ate lots of fat meat or none at all; they were married or never married; they took long walks or they didn't. It is hard to gainsay them: research on nutrition, for example, is based on only three populations: nineteen to twenty-four years; twenty-five to fifty; and fifty and older. What are the nutritional needs of the sixty-five-year-old? The eighty-five-year-old? The ninety-seven-year-old? No one really knows. Research on other aspects of life for the aging is equally scanty. Statisticians preparing for the White House Conference on Aging in May estimated that the number of people eighty-five and older will increase from 3.3 million today to 18.9 million by 2050.

What to do now, then, largely depends on anecdotal evidence and observing those of greater age. I am fortunate to live in a community where many of the aged are taken seriously and are part of the local scene. The formidable Kathryn Shouse, for instance, remained the guiding light and doyenne of Wolf Trap Farm Park in Virginia, an area center for the performing arts which she founded, until she was almost one hundred. Strom Thurmond, at ninety-two, however wisely, chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee. Supreme Court justices whom I have known were still delivering excellent opinions when nearing the end of their eighties.

And it is not just here that the aging "keep on going on"—the anecdotal recommendation I gather from watching those I know. All over the country nonprofit agencies are depending on the elderly for volunteer help. They deliver Meals-on-Wheels. They tutor the illiterate, newcomers learning English, and needy inner-city children. They give hospice care and help counsel those coping with grief and loss. A national survey this year reported that retirees and *people more than seventy-five years old* are the only groups of adults increasing their volunteer service.

The above counters the prevalent notion that the aged are a selfish political force, an idea encouraged by those intent on cutting back government. They are a political force, of course. Personally, as a child of the Great Depression, I am glad of that. I remember too well when to be old meant to live in fear of penury, hunger, and that grisly institution, the poorhouse.

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(And too many of the elderly still live in poverty or near poverty. The median income for families headed by a sixty-five-year-old or over is only $17,751.) Yet Chalmers Roberts was right when he wrote, reporting on the Conference for the Aging, "My observation is that American society has a very large segment of people who care about others....They [delegates to the conference] seemed mostly...a slice of well-fed, well-spoken Americans, older Americans who had made peace with the idea of aging and were determined to make something out of their elder years" (*Washington Post*, May 9).

Among the few delegates aged ninety or over was Arthur Fleming, secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under Eisenhower. In his speech he reminded those present that they did not live for themselves alone, that they were responsible for "the duties and responsibilities of the national community" and for "the national contract that extends back over sixty years." He also quoted Rabbi Abraham Heschel who said at the first White House Conference on the Aging in 1961, "Old people need a vision, not only a recreation; old people need a dream, not only a memory."

Among the happiest old people I know are those who remain faithful to the dream most of us once shared: that of leaving the world better than we found it. Perhaps the epitome of a ninety-year-old happy, for that reason, was my friend of the last twenty-five years, Mary Bingham, who died recently. Still beautiful at ninety, she would seem to many to have lived a charmed life. She and her husband of fifty-seven years, Barry Bingham, Sr., owner of the *Louisville Courier Journal*, were counted among the nation's elite and lived in the style of "the rich and famous." But they lived also with a sense of obligation—the obligation to make life better for all Kentuckians. In part because of their efforts, beginning in the 1930s, Kentucky achieved a better political system, an improved public school system, racial integration, traveling libraries and health clinics for the rural population, and first-quality cultural institutions.

Mary Bingham was not untouched by tragedy. She lost two grown sons to seemingly senseless accidental deaths. An ugly

"When you've got something left, flaunt *it I say!"*

family controversy exposed the family to unfavorable and intrusive publicity and ended in the relinquishment of their media ownings. When her husband died, she was bereft "because our lives were so intertwined." But she went on presiding over the distribution of money from the Mary and Barry Bingham, Sr., Fund. On the day she died she had just finished giving away $60 million and was being honored by the Louisville Rotary Club for her service to the city. She collapsed before she could finish her speech in which she made graceful acceptance of the honor but typically pointed that there were still things to be done. She urged the audience to provide for putting the public library online so that the information highway would be available to everyone..."regardless of age, economic backgrounds, area of residence, or computer literacy." She felt it necessary that there be public access to solid facts about important issues because she felt that the mass media are destroying men in public service and the political system itself "with self-righteous pomposity and their sneering and contemptuous coverage of all public figures." To the end she sought solutions to society's problems. Within our limits, so should we. □

OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

BELIEFS MATTER

UNDERSTANDING THE AMERICAN SCENE

Every semester I teach a course in introductory sociology, and late in the semester we come to the chapter on religion. I tell my students that religion has played such an important role in American history that it is impossible to understand the United States unless you understand American religion, above all the many-colored coat of American Protestantism. My point is not that the students should become religious; after all, I'm a sociology teacher, not an evangelist. My point is that whether you're religious or not, you need to understand religion if you want to understand America.

I then add that most people, including those who dominate the command posts of American politics and culture, have a poor understanding of American religion. They know little about the role it plays in society today, and they know even less about its historic role.

Why this ignorance? Two main reasons, I think. First, our privatization of religion restrains us from talking about religion in public. Hence it is rarely mentioned in school, in newspapers, or even in private conversations between persons of different denominations. Second, the elites who control the national press, the universities, and the entertainment industry tend to be far more secularized than the American population as a whole. These elites take many things seriously: money, art, politics, technology, sex, crime, drugs, etc. But they find it nearly impossible to take religion seriously, and their inability to do so is reflected in the pictures they paint of American society—pictures that underestimate the social importance of religion.

I tell my students to notice how little attention the press gives to religion. Every

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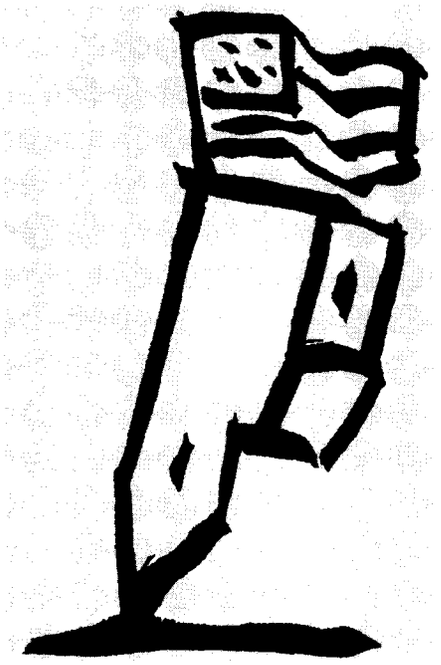
day newspapers, radio, and TV give us plenty of information about government, politics, business, sports, entertainment, crime, and even sex. But religion? Forget it. That's usually confined to the Saturday ghetto of the religion page, except on those special occasions when another priest is charged with sex molestation or when Tammy Bakker remarries. Of course the better newspapers have a religion reporter, but he or she is not allowed to cover political happenings. And political reporters—who are usually expected to know many things besides politics, on the theory that if the only thing you know is politics then you won't even know politics very well—are not expected to have anything but the most amateurish knowledge of religion.

In the spring of 1993 I was able to garnish this lecture with a perfect illustration of the general neglect by the press of American society's religious dimension. I had found a very small item on the weekly religion page of one of my local papers saying that the Southern Baptist Convention had decided not to extend an invitation to President Bill Clinton to address its annual meeting. In recent times Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush had been invited to speak to the annual meeting on a regular basis; but Clinton, despite being a Southern Baptist himself, had so offended the leadership of his denomination after only a few months in the White House that they decided he was unworthy of the customary invitation. In view of his support for abortion and the gay rights agenda, this was not really surprising. The SBC did not invite him for the same reason the retired officers of General



Washington's army did not invite their old comrade-in-arms, Benedict Arnold, to their reunions.

I told my students that this minute notice on the religion page should have been front-page political news. After all, one of Clinton's great strengths as a candidate was that he's a Southerner; and not just any Southerner, but a Southern Baptist, a member of the principal white church in the states of the old Confederacy. The last time a non-Southern Democrat was elected president was in 1960 (long before my students were born). So it looks as if Democrats can win the White House only by nominating Southerners, because they're the only candidates who can pick up enough of the white vote in those states to prevent a Republican sweep or near-sweep of the South; and given a Republican sweep of the South, it is close to impossible for a Democrat to get elected. But look. Here it was, only the spring of 1993, and already Clinton had alienated the white South as a whole. In other words, this little item on the religion page suggested, at least for those who had eyes to see, that Clinton's re-election prospects in 1996 were already in grave danger.

My analysis received a tentative confirmation in the elections of November 1994. But of course any political observer could have made the same analysis, provided he or she did not have a trained incapacity when it comes to religion in American life. On election night, such an observer would not have been surprised to hear exit polls revealing that, while Clinton was fairly unpopular everywhere, his unpopularity went right off the graph in the South.

I can sympathize with political analysts who prefer a simplistic theory of society. After all, it makes their job easier; and who can blame people for trying to make their jobs easier? (I myself am using a computer to write this article, not a quill pen.) Hence the more respectable among the simplifiers adopt a quasi-Marxist theory, saying that everything depends on the economy ("It's the economy, stupid!"). The truly asinine simplifiers adopt an ad-world theory, and say that everything depends on how candidates and programs are packaged for sale to the public.

Unfortunately for those who prefer that society be simple, it is not. Certainly the economy is important, but so is religion. Thus any adequate understanding of society will have to include an understanding of religion. Of course this is a doubly unfortunate truth for those who would like American society to be simple, since American religion—unlike, say, Polish religion—is terribly multifarious. But sorry, there is no escape. Anyone who really wants to understand U.S. politics has no choice but to plunge into the study of American religion in all its bewildering diversity: Catholicism (that's relatively simple), Judaism (that's more complex), and Protestantism (that's positively mind-boggling), not to mention a myriad of other faiths that are neither Protestant, Catholic, nor Jewish. □

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THE NEW NATIONALISM & THE GOSPEL WITNESS

WESTERN TOLERANCE VS. CHRISTIAN REPENTANCE

VIGEN GUROIAN

Early in the summer of 1990, I visited Armenia for the first time. This was on the heels of the massive protests and rallies of 1987-88 and the terrible earthquake in December 1988. In Armenia the expectation was that Gorbachev's days were numbered—as indeed they were—and talk everywhere was of independence. Even the cautious and conservative Armenian church had begun to shift its position and support the popular nationalist movement.

How could I help but embrace these Armenian hopes for sovereignty and self-determination, having been raised knowing how much this meant to my grandparents? And when I returned in the spring of 1991, it looked as if their dreams were coming true. Still, I was wary of the excesses of the nationalist fervor in Armenia, dangers that I had identified even before my visits and that looked even more serious when viewed up close.

I was especially troubled by the behavior of the Armenian church. The diversity of opinion on the national question within the political realm gave reason for a cautious optimism—a genuine civic life and political culture seemed to be emerging. However, the unmistakable mark of expediency in the church's shift from cooperation with the Communist regime to sacralizer of the new nationalism was worrisome; its neglect of the spiritual needs of the people was conspicuous and unforgivable. The gospel pure and simple needed to be preached and practiced in the cities and in the remotest villages. The hierarchy and clergy seemed more comfortable wearing ethnic pride under gold filigreed ecclesiastical robes.

The attitude that the Armenian church (and other churches like it in former Soviet lands) takes toward the new nationalism is a critical matter. Western observers obsessively try to take readings on how well democracy is doing in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. The central question raised: Is this nationalism compatible with liberal values? Certainly the development of democratic institutions is essential, but I submit that the more important and immediate struggle is a spiritual one.

What are the possibilities for the self-professed Christians of these Orthodox Christian lands to practice virtue and love their neighbors during a time when nationalism is on the rise and violence common? In Armenia people are struggling with the tangled religious and moral question of the relationships of faith, identity, and Christian love. It is important to try to understand the nature of the new nationalism in Armenia and how it exists in tension with Christian witness to the gospel, for Armenia is a microcosm of the nationalist struggle and turmoil that affect much of the old Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Before proceeding, something needs to be said about the Western analysis of the ethnic, religious, and nationalistic struggles going on in the East. From an Armenian, Russian, or Ukrainian perspective, Western observers all sound remarkably alike, judging the struggles of peoplehood always from the insistent secular and political criteria of whether

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the outcome will be liberal and democratic in a recognizably Western way. Pluralism and tolerance are not incidental concerns for many people in the emerging democracies. But there is a kind of Western blindness in easy assumptions about multiculturalism and nationhood that is historically naive and patronizing as well as morally obtuse. As Benjamin Schwarz has recently written in the *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1995), "At least as much as other countries, the United States was formed by conquest and force, not by conciliation and compromise....The ideas of foreign-policy experts about finding reasonable solutions to internal conflicts are distorted by an idealized view of America's own history."

That doesn't mean conquest and force are to be condoned. But it does mean that Americans should not expect democracy in the East to look exactly like democracy in the West or that pluralism and tolerance have been easily achieved anywhere. Culture and history matter. Too often Western assumptions about Eastern Europe display ignorance of or lack of interest in the distinctive religious histories of the peoples of these Orthodox nations and how that history is related to their aspirations for self-determination and national sovereignty. The United States, after all, is arguably a nation founded on a set of ideas, not an ethnic nationalism. Germany, France, and England are also democracies but in each, nationhood is much more entangled with questions of ethnic and/or religious identity. Such is also the case in Eastern Europe.

In an article published over twenty years ago, long before virtually anyone anticipated the extraordinary events of the past decade, the liberal political philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin gave the "new nationalism" a name. He called it "bent twig" nationalism. With this metaphor he brought attention to the peculiar characteristics of nationalisms that are reactions against repressive forces that have stolen people's dignity and imposed a deadening control over their collective life. Such nationalism, Berlin argued, has value in and of itself—independent of democratic principles. It has the potential of being an important first stage in the healing of old wounds.

Berlin's thesis was an advance over standard liberal prejudices and blindness, which often insisted on a coercive universalism. Liberal universalism was, after all, notoriously sympathetic to imperialism. The "bent twig" analysis encouraged a broader approach to nationalism and even argued that nationalism needn't be antithetical to broad liberal values and democracy. The interplay of faith, identity, conflict, and concord in Eastern Europe or Russia needs to be seen in this light.

Michael Ignatieff, a British historian and journalist, examined these issues in characteristically liberal and Western fashion in his *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994). Ignatieff argued that there are two kinds of nationalism, ethnic and civic. "Ethnic nationalism claims...that an individual's attachments are inherited, not chosen. It is national community that defines the individual, not the individuals who define the national community." For Ignatieff, this is unacceptable. Civic nationalism, on the other hand, embraces pluralism and envisages the nation as a community of equals in which ethnicity is only one component of modern identity, and a diminishing factor at that. Ignatieff concludes that of the two types of nationalism, civic nationalism "has a greater claim to sociological realism" because "most societies are not monoethnic; and even when they are, common ethnicity is only one of the many claims on an individual's loyalties. Civic nationalism is right to hold that what keeps a society together is not common roots but law."

Rhetorically this abstract celebration of law sounds very soothing to Western ears. But I find Ignatieff's claim about where the greater realism lies incredible. What makes him think ethnicity (and its accompanying component of religious belonging) are diminishing as a source of identity? Like so many other observers, he chooses to disbelieve what he sees. Ignatieff dismisses as fantasies of nationalist ideology the testimony of people in Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine, and other places who insist that religion and ethnicity are at the core of their identity. But if self-determination is a democratic goal, mustn't we take the identity claims of a self-determining people seriously?

Ignatieff describes himself as a nationalist in the limited sense of civic nationalism. He equates this with cosmopolitanism—a creed, as he says, that is not beyond the nation because it depends upon "the capacity of nation-states to provide security and civility for citizens....[As] a civic nationalist, [I am] someone who believes in the necessity of nations." But have nations ever been forged or defended out of such a thin sense of identity? Believing in the necessity of nations in an almost administrative sense is very different from believing that one belongs to a nation in a deep, thick, bloody and membranous sense. It is not surprising that Ignatieff's discussion of Christianity in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic lands, especially Eastern European countries and the Ukraine, is largely anecdotal. He doesn't dig deeply into the religious and ethnic identity issue, which is the underbelly of so much of the new nationalism.

Much of what we in the West want or fear will happen in the East is a projection of our own worries or conceits. Even among many who take religion as a serious component of democratic culture, the unstated assumption is that a rigidly secular liberalism is somehow a prerequisite and precondition of civic virtue. We are deeply suspicious of, if not simply hostile to, kinship and language as components of civic culture. Equally unacceptable is the notion of church that (in Ernst Troeltsch's sense) is identified with a people or land as an ecology and history and not just real estate sold or distributed by contract. We even sometimes call such expressions of solidarity unchristian.

Given such assumptions, it is next to impossible for us to appreciate why the Bosnian Muslim or Serbian Orthodox would fight to the death over the same land, why Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Israelis spill blood over the territory of the West Bank, or why Armenians surrounded by Azerbaijanis

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refuse to abandon the mountains and valleys of Nagorno-Karabagh. Or, I would suggest, why Virginians opposed to slavery felt compelled by honor to fight for the Confederacy and Northerners with no sympathy for abolition were willing to die to preserve the Union. Fundamental allegiances are complex and overdetermined, never merely self-interested.

Let me at least try to convey a sense of the thick human reality that often ties Christianity to nationalism in the East and in doing so challenges some of our bedrock secular suppositions. No one could possibly deny that the gospel of peace and reconciliation is having hard going in Armenia, Ukraine, or Serbia. My own experiences in Armenia have proven that to me. But I am equally aware that the history and resources of Christian ethics in these Orthodox lands are not well understood by Christians in the West. Several personal experiences illustrate this, but also suggest how Christian ethics might actually begin to enter public life more positively in Armenia and the East.

One afternoon in June of 1991, I was strolling through the streets of Yerevan with Lillet Zagaryan, a historian of medieval art, and Erna Melikyan, a classicist. The two women explained to me how many Armenians were returning to the church in search of something to believe in after the spiritual desolation imposed by the Soviet system. Lillet said that a new morality was needed. She believed that morality is a universal, but suspected also that there is something specific and compelling about Christian morality, which requires supererogatory acts toward one's neighbor, even the neighbor who is an enemy. I said that I thought that Christian ethics includes more than moral principles or universalizable rules, that it is joined to a person whom Christians are asked to imitate and follow. "You mean Jesus," she responded. "I do not dispute that he was an historical person....But Christianity teaches us to turn the other cheek and love our enemy. That is difficult. How can we love Turks or Azeris?...When faced with such enemies maybe it is better not to be so moral, so Christian." Erna agreed: "Such a morality is nearly impossible for Armenians."

Several days after my conversation with Lillet and Erna, I was with a group of young men and women who form the core of an active youth movement at the diocesan church of Saint Sarkis in Yerevan. The bishop, who was present, asked if someone would explain what it means to be Christian. The young people were quick to respond. "It means to follow Christ and to become as much like him as possible" was the unanimous answer. I asked these young people whether they were familiar with the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where Saint Paul exhorts his audience to offer themselves to God to "conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect." Everyone was familiar with the passage and they all volunteered that it was very important, especially for Armenians.

"We must reach an understanding," said one, "about the passages that mention blessing your enemies and not seeking revenge, but giving help to your enemy when he needs help." I then told the group about what Lillet and Erna had said to me, especially about turning the other cheek. The nearly unanimous opinion of the eight or ten young men and women was that there was no escaping the directness of these passages. They were not surprised by what Lillet and Erna said. They had seen this resistance to the radical nature of the Christian gospel in others and experienced it themselves. Love of neighbor, even the neighbor who is our enemy, was the greatest challenge the gospel posed to Armenians. These youths were not pacifists, although they entertained that possibility. Instead, they wanted to wrestle with the question of who is truly an enemy and what is vengeful and uncharitable in oneself.

My young friends believed that nothing short of re-evangelizing the Armenian people would supply the moral fiber needed to forestall violence and the cycle of revenge. Remember, Armenians, like Russians and Ukrainians, live deeply in the past as well as in the present. All of these peoples, even nonbelievers among them, trace their origins as a people back to stories of conversion to Christianity. Moreover, these young men and women were moved by the rock-bottom truth of Christian faith that pride and fear block love, and that the gospel clears the ground for love and justice to grow. Can any society afford to squander such moral capital?

In May of 1994, James H. Billington wrote on Russia and Orthodoxy in the *New Republic*, grappling with the realities I have described. Billington urged his readers to take seriously the power of the explicitly Christian language and symbolism of repentance and forgiveness in Russian and how that has been a fabric of social peace in Orthodox lands. He described the coup attempt of 1991 and how it echoed so much of Russian history and the religious imagination in Russia:

> After the putsch collapsed, Russians were brought together emotionally by the quasi-religious burial procession for the three young men killed during the coup attempt. Memories were evoked of the first Russian saints, Boris and Gleb, young medieval princes who voluntarily accepted death in order to prevent dissension in the Russian land. And the classic totalitarian avoidance of individual responsibility seemed to end with the moving words addressed [by Boris Yeltsin] to the parents of the three fallen martyrs: "Forgive me, your president, that I was not able to protect and defend your sons."
>
> "Forgive me" is what Russians say to each other before taking Communion. They are the last words uttered by an earlier Boris in Russia's greatest national opera, *Boris Gudunov*. "Forgive us" were the words on many of the bouquets sent to Andrei Sakharov's funeral in December 1989. Almost with these words alone, Yeltsin seemed to invest power with a higher authority. Someone blameless was assuming responsibility in a society where people in power never used to accept responsibility for anything. And he did it in the language of faith.

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Billington's reference to the Communion service of the Orthodox faith is not incidental. Indeed, eucharistic atonement is central to Orthodox ethics, and is the key to unlocking an understanding of our love of neighbor as a process that begins with individual penance and moves toward mutual reconciliation. Orthodox Christians consume the bloody flesh of their Lord after having embraced their near neighbor, not just with a polite handshake but with a full embrace. They are challenged in this act to embrace the flesh of their more distant neighbors as gift and not to repeat the ancient legacy of the race to mutilate their neighbor's flesh and spill his blood. Billington did not mention that the three young men who died defending Russian democracy were of different faiths: Orthodox, Muslim, and Jew. But, of course, this only adds more force to his comments.

Unfortunately many Westerners, and ironically many Christian Westerners, instinctively recoil from such public religious language. Perhaps this is one reason why Alexandr Solzhenitsyn (and often John Paul II) has been written off by many as a kind of authoritarian crank. For Solzhenitsyn persists in calling Russia to repentance and placing more faith in the power of conversion of the heart than in any modern political ideology. Listen to how he addressed his countrymen twenty years ago before anyone seriously imagined what we see happening today.

> We have so bedeviled the world, brought it so close to destruction, that repentance is now a matter of life and death—not for the sake of a life beyond the grave (which is thought merely comic nowadays), but for the sake of our life here and now....
>
> It is now only too obvious that we have throughout the ages preferred to censure, denounce, and hate others , instead of censuring, denouncing, and hating ourselves.... [Nevertheless we are] reluctant to believe that the universal dividing line between good and evil runs not between countries, not between nations..., not even between good men and bad men; the dividing line cuts across nations and parties, shifting constantly, yielding now to the pressure of light, now the pressure of darkness. It divides the human heart of every man....
>
> We must stop blaming everyone else—our neighbors and more distant peoples, our geographical, economic, or ideological rivals, always claiming that we are in the right.
>
> Repentance is the first bit of firm ground underfoot, the only one from which we can go forward not to fresh hatreds but to concord ("Repentance and Limitation," in *From under the Rubble*).

We in the West seem incapable of hearing this language of repentance spiritually or with an appreciation for its powerful cultural and institutional embeddedness within Russian national life. We think tolerance is a principle that stands on its own outside of any larger moral narrative or agreement about the common purposes of life. Naively, I think, we believe that democratic institutions and procedures alone will secure civic peace. Yet it wasn't so long ago that Reinhold Niebuhr argued that the spirit of democratic tolerance is not solely the product of secular values nor secured by democratic institutions alone. Niebuhr judged that the humility born of repentance was one "of the great resources of...faith for social achievement." He believed that strong religious faith could and ought to be "a fount of humility" and that if such humility became a disposition in political life it was "capable of moving men to moderate their national pride."

Interestingly, Reinhold Niebuhr was named by the religious intelligentsia that I met during visits to Russia in the early 1990s as a Western theologian they found especially helpful in sorting out issues of faith, ethnicity, nationalism, and democracy. These religious democrats dreaded the possibility of a renewed triumphalism within the Russian Orthodox church, but they also believed that faith provided resources for building the moral foundations of a new, more democratic order. That is the paradox at the heart of developments in the East.

At least in this regard Solzhenitsyn may know the Russians—and by extension the Ukrainians, Armenians, and others—much better than do the people who dismiss his invocations of faith and repentance. The appeal to a self-consciously Christian sense of repentance need not have anything to do, either, with a worn-out belief in the old sacral order of Christendom. The progress of secularism in Russia or Armenia, however, does not have the same history as our liberal secularity—it was imposed by totalitarian dictatorship, not by the forces of liberal individualism or consumerism. That makes a big difference.

In Russia and perhaps Armenia the decision the church makes, whether to return to bad old habits of sacralizing ethnic pride and the political order or to act as the conscience of the nation, will make an enormous difference. I cannot say for sure what the political outcomes will be in these lands. But we should not expect that our style of liberalism will necessarily triumph, nor that the dogmas we treat as infallible—such as separation of church and state—will be cloned exactly. Neither should we rule out the possibility that new forms of democracy that do not bear our *imprimatur* will evolve. If this leads us to despair of the possibility of distributive justice and regional peace in these countries, I suspect that is our despair not theirs. More blood might be shed; more shameful human tragedies such as we have witnessed in Bosnia and Chechnya might be repeated. One hopes such dreadful things will not continue. But we cannot expect to understand or influence events if our eyes pass over all of what is at stake in these lands, not only the fate of democracy but the ethos and faith of peoples who are struggling to reenter history after a long submersion in darkness and humiliation. The churches will play an important role in Ukraine, Russia, and Armenia in sowing seeds of either discord or of peace. Let not our own secularity or even unbelief blind us to that force and all of its possibilities. □

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THE SYNAGOGUE AT LIPTOVSKY MIKULAS

SLOVAKIA'S EVER-PRESENT PAST

MILTON GOLDIN

The Slovak town of Liptovsky Mikulas lies near the Tatra Mountains, in a countryside of almost other-worldly natural magnificence. Ruins of castles look down from heights over the Vah, a river along which Slavs have lived since the sixth century. Jews are known to have been in Prague during the tenth century; possibly, some arrived in this part of Slovakia at the same time.

My wife's parents were born in nearby villages, and some relatives still live there. Besides its location, Liptovsky Mikulas has several distinctions. One is a succession of Jewish mayors during the latter years of the nineteenth century, a time when Slovakia was experiencing violent anti-Semitic outbreaks. Another is that the Hlinka Guard, a Slovak version of the SS, used the town as an assembly point for Jews sent to Auschwitz. During a visit in 1977, I asked our driver to take us to where the Jews had been ordered to gather. It turned out to be a nondescript courtyard. Elsewhere in Slovakia, I had seen plaques citing events of World War II, but here I saw no reminders of the deportations.

Our driver suggested we might like to see something else. He drove a short distance, parked, and we walked about a hundred feet between two buildings.

Suddenly, there loomed a synagogue. Its architecture resembled that of the Orthodox temple in which my father had worshiped in Cleveland, when I was a child, except that this synagogue had a wire fence around it, bullet-hole pockmarks on its walls, and padlocks on its doors. The Communist authorities of the time apparently did not think it of practical value as a warehouse, the use to which they had put other abandoned Jewish houses of worship. It stood empty, alone, forgotten.

I found myself saying Kaddish, the Jewish prayer for the dead. I had the eerie feeling that while I was looking at the synagogue, it was watching me. A stranger who was a coreligionist had arrived. The edifice wanted communion. It had no one to whom to turn, and I could not turn away. For me, the building symbolized the Eastern European civilization from which my parents stemmed, a civilization that Hitler's war utterly and finally ended.

My wife is a Slovak-American Catholic, and without exception, our hosts had greeted me warmly. Crucifixes in their homes attested to their commitment to Catholicism. But a half-century earlier, their leaders had proclaimed Slovakia a "Catholic state," and had condemned tens of thousands of Jewish neighbors to death, although they had committed no crimes. Monsignor Jozef Tiso (1877–1947), Slovakia's premier, condoned robberies and deportations, and his compatriots held him in high esteem.

Perhaps some of my wife's relatives or their friends had played a role in the destruction of Slovak Jewry? One of my wife's relatives, whose brother had married a Jew, offered the theory that Tiso really wanted to save Jews from the Germans, but given the SS, he had too few opportunities to do so. I found this hard to believe. True, some wealthy Jews, who paid very large sums to Tiso and other fascists, had lived. But others who had done so died along with poorer brethren.

Much else that I heard troubled me. On the one hand, part of what has been said about the arrogance of wealthy Slovak Jews struck home. On the other hand, nothing could make me forget the synagogue. At one and the same time, I believed the worst of my wife's people and yet saw daily demonstrations of their genuine hospitality. I had to learn more about what had happened.

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For nine hundred years, between 1000 and 1918, Slovaks lived under brutal Hungarian oppression. Their relationship to the conqueror resembled that of the Irish under British domination. Magyars, also largely Catholic, treated Slovaks like human livestock. Clerical anti-Semitism in Slovakia made Jews out to be Christ-killers and ritual murderers of Christian children. But except for the most benighted Slovaks, what concerned non-Jews about Jews was not theoretical ties to the Devil but actual ties to Hungarians. For almost in their entirety, Jews comprised the commercial classes that organized and managed the Slovak economy on Hungary's behalf.

Budapest reciprocated by removing one legal barrier after another to full Jewish citizenship. Some Slovak Jews converted to Catholicism, and a much larger number assimilated. But nearly all Jews ate and dressed better than most Slovak Catholics, and had better housing.

Overwhelmingly, the Slovak Catholics' reaction was to make anti-Semitism an integral part of their nationalism. Slovaks defined Jews as contemptible collaborators. The Jews, meanwhile, drew closer to their Hungarian protectors.

Tiso's independent Slovak Republic, created in 1939 and collapsed in 1945, never amounted to more than a loathsome caricature of Nazi Germany. It considered Hungary the main enemy and concentrated on looting Jews. Slovaks could apply to local offices and obtain Jewish-owned businesses, homes, and whatever other properties they wanted, at laughable prices. They did not have to witness the deportations of Jews, for the Hlinka Guard and the SS took care of such details.

The most poignant artistic attempt to portray what occurred at the time is a 1965 film made in Slovakia, *The Shop on Main Street*. The plot concerns a simple Slovak carpenter who acquires a button shop owned by a senile Jewish widow who is soon to be deported. She eventually grasps what is happening and why. He is torn between a basic decency and circumstances beyond his control. In the end, both perish: she, accidentally from a fall; he, by suicide, which he sees as the only way out. In New York, a visitor from Slovakia told my wife that the movie was nothing but "Jewish politics." The conversation shocked us, as did the idea that Slovak separatists actually dreamt of reestablishing an independent Slovakia on the Tiso model.

Both ideas turned out to be eminently thinkable. As Slovakia prepared to secede from Czechoslovakia in 1993, Slovak officials rehabilitated Tiso and publicly honored the memory of Monsignor Andrej Hlinka, the founder of Slovak fascism and the Hlinka Guard. They shouted the old fascist slogans in the streets and prepared to use the old fascist symbols on street signs.

History was being replayed. Except that some major changes had to be written into the script. For one thing, just 3,000 Jews now live among 5 million Slovaks, whereas 90,000 lived among 3 million in 1939. For another, no Jews hold critical positions in the Slovak economy. Thus another manifestation of a post-World War II Eastern European phenomenon: anti-Semitism without Jews. But how can you claim the existence of Jewish conspiracies when you can't identify a single Jewish conspirator?

Given this conundrum, I was surprised in April 1994, when Slovakia competed with Hungary to offer restitution to Holocaust survivors. On the face of it, the announcement from Bratislava made no sense. But that is where multi-billionaire and philanthropist George Soros enters the picture.

Soros, born a Hungarian Jew and very nearly deported during the Holocaust, began establishing "foundations" in Eastern Europe during the early 1980s. They are now located in sixteen countries, including Slovakia. Soros's avowed purpose is to manage a sort of one-man Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe. He can make available extraordinary sums of money, if he so chooses. His foundation in Ukraine, which saw ghastly anti-Semitism during World War II, has thus far received $250 million.

There are many theories about why Soros does what he does. Some think that he is supremely egotistical. Others, that he wants to affect the destinies of whole nations. And still others, that his philanthropy is a smoke screen for manipulating economies in the wake of the Soviet collapse. But whatever Soros's reasons, Eastern European leaders compete for his attention.

Where does this leave me? I wonder about leaders who offer restitution for events they deny occurred, after they learn of possible foundation grants and investments by a Jew. Is this a return to the "court Jew" of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who served as a private financial adviser to kings, emperors, and dukes? I don't know what to make of it, as I don't know what to make of the welcome I received in Slovakia.

The problem for me is best symbolized by that synagogue in Liptovsky Mikulas. What it said to me is that we should be exposing criminal regimes, and refusing to honor fascist thugs and those who finance them. □

Anne Porter

A Safe Neighborhood

Shopkeepers, bankers, poets, contractors,
Watering quiet lawns
And sleeping in warm houses,

If even here

Some ordinary grief can knife our hearts
Down to the very quick,

How is it for those others?
Famine is their nourishment
Rubble of war their garden
A freezing wind their home.

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ADULTERY PAYS

EASTWOOD'S 'BRIDGES'

Even as I write, the critics of National Public Radio and the better periodicals are reassuring their listeners and readers that they absolutely hated Robert James Waller's book but, since the Clint Eastwood adaptation of *The Bridges of Madison County* is such an improvement on the original, is so well directed, beautifully photographed and, above all, soaringly acted, they feel no compunction about recommending it.

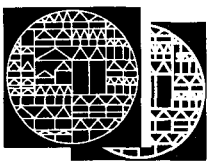
But I'm a *Madison County* virgin, so I will have to judge the film on its own merits.

And, to cut to the chase, I think the movie is dreadful. It is pretentious trash and has the defining qualities of pretentious trash: glossiness instead of beauty, complacency toward human nature disguised as all-embracing compassion, self-satisfaction posturing as gnomic wisdom.

Richard LaGravenese's script galumphs. Although the prologue, in which the grown children of the recently dead Francesca Johnson (Meryl Streep) discover their mother's journal, runs only a few minutes, it seems to take forever. This is because the dialogue is ludicrous, the rummagings in trunks and chit-chat with lawyers tedious, and the acting of Victor Slezak as Francesca's son risible (although Annie Corley as the daughter provides the one believable element in the movie). When he learns that his mother wished to be cremated, an ordinary enough request (even in Iowa), Slezak's eyebrows start traveling up to his hairline, as if Mom had asked that human sacrifices be offered over her grave.

But finally the kids begin reading and the main story unfolds. Francesca, an Italian woman who married an American G.I., now languishes on an Iowa farm, her sensual and intellectual capacities unplumbed. While the rest of the family is away at a state fair, a *National Geographic* photographer named Kincaid (Eastwood) stops at the homestead to ask for directions to the bridges he is to shoot and, after she directs him to the bridges, Francesca directs Kincaid to her bed. But not *soon* after. At least not soon enough as far as I was concerned.

No, the whole first half of this movie is nothing more than Kincaid and Francesca giving themselves permission to go to bed. I have never seen such a smirky, self-entranced, affectedly demure ballet of courtship on or off the screen. There are interminable peek-a-boo sequences in which Streep gazes on the bare-chested Eastwood (still fit in his mid-sixties) from her bedroom window as he washes up in her yard or spies on him from the interstices of a bridge as he snaps away at the structure. These lead to an obligatory woman-discovering-her-own-sexuality moment with Streep examining her nude body in front of a mirror, a scene which might have worked had it been allowed some real sexual voltage instead of being tastefully pho-



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tographed with Vaseline-coated lenses. When Streep takes a bath, the bubbles dutifully form themselves into sudsy g-string and bra. Once the couple tub together, they sit frozen in a lugubrious tableau as if they were both posing for David's *The Death of Marat*. For the first session in bed, there are so many lap-dissolves of the embracing bodies that the lovemaking itself evaporates. This isn't sensuality; it's airhead lyricism dished up for New Age hedonists.

Was Eastwood trying to strip an adulterous relationship of its carnality? If so, he certainly wasn't doing it for moralistic reasons, for there's nothing in the movie that indicates that he finds anything wrong with adultery *per se*. Showing Streep some snaps he took of Africa, Eastwood explains the Dark Continent this way: "There's no imposed morality there." Whenever Streep's son, while reading the journals, splutters indignation at his mother's affair, he is made to look like a ludicrous avatar of such "imposed morality." (His much more agreeable sister, on the other hand, condones the affair.) Asked to describe her husband, Streep tells Eastwood that hubby is "very, very...clean." "Clean?" repeats the photographer with understandable incredulity. Well, we get the point, even if he doesn't. Besides, this Kincaid is absolutely irresistible, a sensitive artist as well as handsome hunk. To ram this point home, we are treated to the obligatory scene in which our heroine looks through her lover's portfolio and tells him how brilliant his work is, that he must develop his talents, make a book, etc., etc. And don't think that our hero isn't philosophically profound as well as visually talented. "You know," our hero leads in with deceptive casualness, "I like to scribble things down" (oh, oh) "and something I wrote the other day"—wait, let me get a pad, so I can write this down, too—"goes like this: the old dreams were good, but things didn't work out that way. Still, I'm glad I had 'em."

The director originally slated for *Bridges* was Bruce Beresford, gifted creator of *Breaker Morant*, *Black Robe*, and *Tender Mercies*, but the Australian parted company with Eastwood because Beresford couldn't share his lead actor's high opinion of LaGravanese's script. Dear, intelligent Bruce Beresford!

But what has the script evoked from Eastwood in the way of directing and acting? He has proven, with *White Hunter, Black Heart*, and *Unforgiven*, that he can rise to the occasion of good scripts. Can he also transcend bad material?

Well, if the script is unbearably clumsy, the direction is unbearably neat. Examples:

Our hero, getting ready to wine and dine Francesca in her house, spins the dial on the kitchen radio until he finds appropriately romantic music. Not three bars later, not two bars later, *but on the very first note* of a slurpy song, Streep enters the room in her new dress.

A locally well-known adulteress (not Streep) enters a restaurant where Eastwood is eating in the company of a score of townspeople. Immediately and simultaneously, everyone stops talking. Dead silence as scarlet woman reconnoiters for a seat. A cheerless face looks up as she approaches, then a second, then a third. It's like the entrance of a gunfighter into a saloon, the kind that makes the poker game halt and the Mexican guitar player in the corner stop strumming. Was Eastwood having a flashback to his Sergio Leone days when he staged this scene?

The acting? I had expected the Eastwood-Streep pairing to be fun to watch: master movie minimalist vs. exuberant theatrical chameleon. The match fizzles. Eastwood never sinks beneath competence, but here there's none of the edginess and cold, Calvinistic severity that shade and tighten his best performances. When Eastwood is being laid-back, he's about as interesting as an overaged California beach bum. As for Streep, her Italian accent is both perfect and unobtrusive, but her gestural flourishes (the constant patting of the hair, the self-abnegating walk, the elaborately woozy demeanor) cocoon her characterization instead of developing it. She's done her homework all right, but it remains homework. And (unlike her characterizations in *Sophie's Choice* and *A Cry in the Dark*) Streep's Francesca is essentially sexless.

But perhaps that sexlessness has something to do with the strategy of the story itself, a strategy which explains the amazing success of the novel and the almost certain success of the movie. For an era that follows the sexual excesses of the sixties and early seventies and now knows sexual lacerations, sexual plague, and family fragmentation, Waller's tale brings balm. Have an affair, by all means, this story seems to tell us, follow your bliss and all will be well. At the end of her journal, Francesca writes that she was able to endure her marriage precisely because she could draw upon the memories of her affair for emotional nourishment. Indeed, Francesca's bliss engenders marital salvation right into the next generation, for, after reading about it, her children immediately get in touch with their estranged spouses and reconciliations seem just around the corner. (But if they *really* wanted to insure marriages as perdurable as their mother's, shouldn't they also run out and commit rapturous adulteries?)

And that's why I think *The Bridges of Madison County*, in print and on celluloid, has been and will be such a stupendous success. It drafts adultery into the human potential movement.

RICHARD ALLEVA

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The thinning of democracy

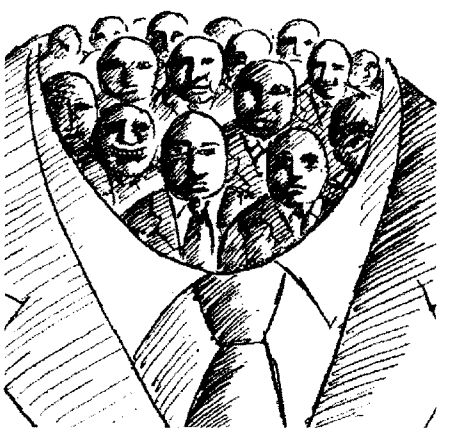
SELF-RULE
A Cultural History of American Democracy
Robert H. Wiebe
University of Chicago Press, $25.95, 321 pp.

Alan Wolfe

Democracy is much on the minds of contemporary intellectuals. Jean Bethke Elshtain thinks it is "on trial." The late Christopher Lasch wondered if Americans deserve it. Republican thinkers, having won the last election, find no particular flaws with it. Yet as Robert Wiebe argues in his enlightening must-read, almost no one has a clear conception of what democracy is. Wiebe offers a narrative of democracy's "cultural history," an account of how our predecessors understood what democracy meant to them. American democracy began for white males only. Unruly, often violent, and certainly noisy elections bore little relationship to the well-financed, low-turn-out campaigns of today. Wiebe's account of early American experiences with democracy is wonderful. Only in this country was the idea taken seriously that no one other than the individual in question owned a rightful claim to a particular person's labor. Despite slavery and the exclusion of women, the equality spawned by America's lack of feudalism spilled over into every place in which white men came together: local political clubs, neighborhoods, saloons, sporting events. Democracy, Wiebe argues, built America. What contemporary Europeans did not like about it—"its diffusion of responsibility, its resistance to institutionalized power, its blanketing of the nation"—is what made it so valuable.

As America matured, democracy expanded and contracted simultaneously. The positive side of the story is well-known. The Civil War amendments broke the legal status of slavery, and, after a disgracefully long time, racial discrimination in voting came to an end. Women eventually obtained the right to vote, although, in Wiebe's account, it took the shame of being the only mature country in the world without women's suffrage before the United States took that step. In a formal sense, twentieth-century America was far more "democratic" than the America of the previous centuries.

But Wiebe also describes how, as the groups that participated in democracy expanded, the meaning of democracy thinned out. Progressives cleaned up the noises and dirt of elections, but left in place a class society in which the less respectable were subtly encouraged not to participate. Meanwhile, at the top of society, a national elite came into being, undermining local middle classes. Administration replaced politics. Hierarchies appeared everywhere. Cynics such as Walter Lippmann argued that democracy, understood as self-rule, was impossible. The result was "the disappearance of the People, the ultimate expression of nineteenth-century self-government that in the culture of America's original democracy spoke through general elections to make broad policy determinations."



The story of modern democracy is the story of the state. Government came to pervade all areas of American life, but, as Wiebe describes it, the process was uneven and contradictory. The New Deal was not simply an expansion of national power; it represented, rather, a compromise between national elites and local middle classes, one that only broke down forty years later. At the same time, the expansion of government was accompanied by an expansion of rights against the government. Individualism and majoritarianism were at war with each other, and liberals wanted both. But the overall outcome was never in doubt: "In the nineteenth century, democracy shaped the state; in the twentieth the state shaped democracy."

Democracy, Wiebe concludes, is not currently strong enough to resolve the demands upon it. "Anyone seeking a political solution to complicated social questions soon learned how poorly a weakened electoral democracy served to resolve distributional issues of any sort...." Or, as Wiebe succinctly puts it: "limits at every turn." American democracy, which began with tumultuous energy, is now moribund; it will only be revived if "the centralized, hierarchical structure of relations that first took shape in the 1890s and the 1920s, a structure that resists popular participation and at the least operates in tension with individualist democracy" is significantly abolished.

Wiebe is aware that a cultural history of democracy can help put into context current debates about whether America suffers from too much democracy—or too little. Wiebe has no doubts about the answer. A passionate democrat himself, he clearly would prefer a system which com-

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bined the deep participation of white male democracy with the inclusiveness of its twentieth-century version. Yet there is a way in which his history and his advocacy work at cross purposes. For Wiebe's ideal democracy is one that, in fact, did not occur. As a democrat, he is disappointed. But as a historian, he owes us an explanation.

There is at least one possible explanation for the thinness of democracy, and it is one that Wiebe's political commitments will not allow him to accept. An uninspiring democracy could simply be what a democratic people have democratically chosen. Democracy is inherently more passionate when it is more restricted; the stakes are higher, the injustice of exclusion more stark, the ability to mobilize more compelling. For the same reasons, if in reverse, a democracy that has become more inclusive will also lose its righteous indignation. It could even happen that democracy would result in the election of leaders poised to restrict democracy. One simply has to accept that democracy is a process that cannot presuppose an outcome.

Yet at times Wiebe seems to be arguing that democracy is not genuine unless a substantive outcome results. He cites, for example, Ian Shapiro's argument that democracy is inevitably tied to "an ethic of opposition." "Democracy," Wiebe continues in his own voice, "is always a superior power, never a vulnerable citizen. In no case does it have a stake in personal humiliation."

I am in full accord with Wiebe's personal values on this point, but I wonder if he has not come uncomfortably close to defining democracy as the fulfillment of the goals of the Left. If so, he runs the risk of being no different from the progressive reformers he so effectively criticizes. For what if Americans do not want the politics of the Left? They have, after all, been fairly clear in recent elections that they want more Republicans and conservatives. Does a democrat tell them they can't have them? One of the few significant weaknesses in *Self-Rule* is the lack of attention paid to the fact that, whatever intellectuals think, most Americans are translating their unhappiness with democracy into support for the Right.

Wiebe's historical treatment of democracy is so engaging because it is so realistic. He evokes the nitty-gritty of democracy, the way it feels in the streets and in the lodges. Democracy comes alive in his book because it is not tied to an abstract theory of how the world ought to work but a finely grained sociological description of how it did. This is what makes his conclusion seem awkward. For as an advocate, rather than as a historian, Wiebe is more romantic than realist, urging what should happen rather than what did. The closer his account comes to the present, the less convincing it is.

Despite this one flaw, *Self-Rule* is a brilliantly written, stunningly energetic, and wide-ranging account of what America used to be like. Whether or not our history can help us now—Wiebe is far more confident on this point than I would be—this book is bound to give the public discussion over the future of democracy far more grounding than it currently has. □

GRAHAM, WE HARDLY KNEW YE

LIFE OF GRAHAM GREENE
Volume II: 1939–55
Norman Sherry
Viking, $22.95, 562 pp.

GRAHAM GREENE
The Enemy Within
Michael Shelden
Random House, $25, 442 pp.

GRAHAM GREENE
An Intimate Portrait by His Closest Friend and Confidant
Leopoldo Durán
HarperCollins, $24, 352 pp.

GRAHAM GREENE
Man of Paradox
A. F. Cassis, ed.
Loyola University Press, $16.95, 507 pp.

Alberto Huerta

In the last few months, an army of biographers has laid siege to Greeneland, but whether that paradoxical terrain has been conquered or even reliably mapped is open to question. In the books under review here, one portrays Greene as an inveterate sinner, another makes him out to be a cynical sexual predator if not a pervert, while a third celebrates Greene's irreverent piety in a fashion that all but calls for canonization. How is the reader to make sense of such contradictory readings?

Not easily. Norman Sherry, Greene's authorized biographer, and Michael Shelden, the author of a well-received biography of George Orwell who has pursued Greene very much on his own, present complementary but decidedly different pictures of Greene. In both books, the image we may have had of Greene as the one-time atheist who flirted with suicide and communism, who worked for the British Secret Service, was courted in his last years by Central American revolutionaries, and simultaneously became a great Catholic novelist is shaken in important respects. Both authors subject Greene's *persona* and literary stature to a kind of malevolent deconstruction. In the process, they often conflate the seedy and shadowy world of Greeneland, where good and evil share equal footing, with the actual life of the man. A good example of their method is the short shrift both give to Greene's political interests, something he took rather seriously. But that is not their worst failing.

Both Sherry and Shelden demonstrate a penchant for prurience that distorts their investigation. Their exaggerated interest in Greene's peccadilloes as a philanderer with London prostitutes too often reduces Greene to little more than a kind of unrepressed hormone on the verge of constant eruption. This prurience provokes questions about motives. Undoubtedly, if Greene were alive today, he would vig-

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orously combat the pseudo-Freudian conjectures of both biographers.

In that light, it is important to remember certain constants in Graham Greene's life, lest these biographies undermine completely our faith in him and his work. Those who lived and worked with Greene knew him as a very private person, basically shy and mild-mannered, an unpretentious post-Victorian gentleman. Despite Shelden's extravagant charges, Greene was quite loyal in his own way to those he cared about. When he separated from his wife Vivien, he continued to support her until his death. He remained a friend to the women he loved, often helping them long after the affair had ended. It is also important to remember that Greene was a perpetual prankster. He mocked everything, from the strict regulations governing the Secret Intelligence Service to the dogmas of his church and Vatican bureaucrats. For him, the profane and sacred were open territory. Despite this irreverent side, Euan Cameron, who worked with Greene for fifteen years at the publishing house Bodley Head, described him as "one always concerned for others, always kind and sweet, and constantly doing what he could for others." And in my own ten years of exchanging letters with Greene, we explored ways to financially help his distraught priest friend and now memoirist, Leopoldo Durán, once a professor of English literature at the University of Madrid.

Authorized biographer Sherry has to be admired for his tenacity in digging up every tree in Greeneland, in order to find every buried artifact. But accumulating a mass of material does not guarantee that one will interpret that material well. Indeed, shortly before his death in 1991, Greene wrote to me of his concern about setting Sherry straight on a number of questions. He was particularly distressed at Sherry's interpretation of his stint in Vietnam in the 1950s and with how Sherry would handle new information on Greene's friend, the notorious British spy Kim Philby, who defected to the Soviet Union in 1963.

From 1941–42, Greene served in the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) as agent 59200 in West Africa, and later in London under Philby at MI6. They became friends. In May 1944, just before the Normandy invasion, Greene resigned from SIS. He later explained his sudden departure as a way to avoid playing into Philby's power struggle at SIS. However, in 1968 Greene, ever loyal to what he termed the virtue of disloyalty, wrote the introduction to Philby's *My Silent War*, an attack on SIS. That naturally raises the question of whether Greene knew more about Philby's traitorous actions than he let on. Shelden, for one, suggests as much.

Greene had other doubts about Sherry's multivolume biography. He expressed some of those to me in a letter in August 1989. "Reviewers have been rather kind to Sherry's first volume [*The Life of Graham Greene, Volume I: 1904–39*], but I found it far too long and full of unnecessary details. Anyway, I hate being writ-

F·A·L·L
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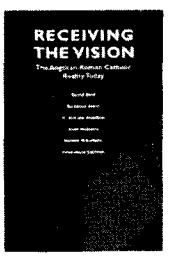

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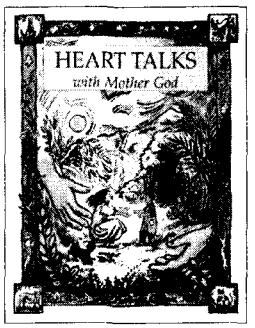

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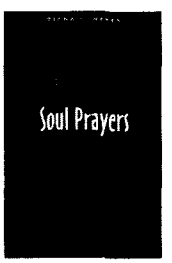

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ten about...." Greene dispelled rumors concerning his allegiance to the Catholic church in the same letter. Like the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno (1864–1936), whom he greatly admired, Greene stated the paradoxical nature of his faith: "Your rumor [that I have left the church] is not quite correct. I usually go to Mass on a Sunday but sometimes I have too many people to see or too much work to do. I disagree with a good deal that the pope has said and done but that doesn't mean that I have left the church. I would call myself at the worst a Catholic agnostic!"

Sherry's second volume suffers from many of the same problems as the first. He cannot see the forest for the trees. He has done his research well: spent years in libraries in Europe and in America; interviewing almost everyone who spoke, knew, or slept with Greene; retracing Greene's steps, weathering the elements and suffering the maladies of travel. But he has failed to harness the material into an ordered, balanced form.

Sherry seems fearful that if he does not put all the information down first, someone else might, and he would lose his claim as Greene's authorized biographer. But selection is important. Without it, a book loses its coherence. For example, Sherry discovered a cache of more than 1,000 letters in Georgetown University's library by Catherine Walston, the great love of Greene's life. This was great scholarly sleuthing, but the material subsequently overwhelms the book. Walston was obviously a central figure in Greene's life, but in trying to tell her story Sherry unduly neglects other important relationships. He also mixes reality and fiction. For example, Walston's letters are used interchangeably with a passage from *The End of the Affair*, the novel Greene wrote about his affair with Walston. But whatever one may think about Walston's unconventional marriage and sexual behavior, relying on the novel to discuss Walston's actual behavior is unacceptable. Fiction is never the best proof for establishing the facts. At best, it is a hypothesis.

In the end, Sherry's biography is not hijacked by either Catherine Walston or his obsession with Greene's sexual prowess and alleged sadomasochistic tendencies, but by the CIA. According to Sherry, Greene didn't hesitate to work for the Western intelligence services, including the CIA. Sherry relies on an unidentified former CIA senior officer, who asserts "Greene was doing a short-term operational assignment [in Vietnam] because Trevor [British consul in Hanoi] was gone...." But why does Sherry trust such a questionable source to substantiate his theory that Greene remained an active spy?

Michael Shelden's biography is more tightly written, with excellent summaries of Greene's works. However, his assumptions and conclusions are even more unconvincing than Sherry's. If one believes Shelden, Greene was anti-Semitic, a depraved sadomasochistic and closet homosexual, vindictive and consumed by hate, forever a deceptive and misanthropic spy, and a very cruel man—Joseph's Conrad's Kurtz incarnate. Quite a bill of indictment.

Shelden disavows any malign intent, saying that he just happened to stumble on Greene's fraudulent and subversive nature in the course of his research, an excuse that gives him license to castigate Greene. Shelden's method of documentation is too general, and he is prone to exaggerated readings. He never met Greene, and seems resentful that he has not been granted the same access to Greene's material as Sherry. He has little sense of humor, and does not appreciate Greene's nature as a prankster. His tone is often sophomoric and sarcastic.

For Shelden, there seems to be no border between fiction and fact, speculation and reasoned deduction. He freely conjectures about nearly every aspect of Greene's life, especially the writer's alleged appetite for violence, betrayal, and sexual indulgence.

Leopoldo Durán, a close friend of Greene's for many years, writes about the conversations the two had on trips through northern Spain. But Durán's book is disorganized and repetitive. It is more about how well Durán knew Greene than about anything else. The best pages discuss the origins of Greene's hilarious novel, *Monsignor Quixote* (1982), a subject that itself might have made for a wonderful book. But obsession drives Durán over the edge. He plays a game of hide-and-seek

A toast

When Graham Greene died in April 1991, he would have been delighted to know that, four years later, a bottle of vodka would be sitting on an altar in a Voodoo temple in Croix des Bouquets, Haiti, in his honor, and that a democratically elected populist priest-turned-president would have lifted Papa Doc Duvalier's condemnation of his novel, *The Comedians* (1966).

On May 26, Haiti's minister of culture, Jean-Claude Bajeux, honored Greene posthumously during the first Haitian Writers' Conference of exiled and national writers. Bajeux and *Time* correspondent Bernard Diederich, who helped arrange the conference, had known Greene since 1954; the three had reconnointered on the Haitian-Dominican border in 1965. At the conference, Bajeux delivered a lecture that would have pleased Greene: "The Metaphysics of Evil according to Graham Greene." Greene's niece Louise Dennys and her husband Eric also attended, the first family members to set foot on Haitian soil.

Later, President Jean-Bertrand Aristide welcomed participants to the palace. During a forty-minute meeting, discussion centered on eliminating the residual effects of evil. Aristide spoke enthusiastically about the massive literacy campaign he intends to launch. With an illiteracy rate of 87 percent, a successful war on ignorance might help push Haiti into the twenty-first century as a viable democracy. In the short time left in his term, Aristide noted, he hopes to bequeath to his people the power to read and write. It would make a good ending to an unwritten Greene novel. A.H.

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with the reader, claiming he was a priest Greene could trust, and that the two had many conversations, some up to fourteen hours, where secrets were exchanged. The reader waits for some revelation, or at least some insight into Greene. But nothing is forthcoming. Instead, one experiences the innocent, but fanciful imaginings of secretive Durán trying to be funny, which he is not. The one virtue the book has is that it proves Greene was more Catholic than Sherry and Shelden concede. Greene made an annual retreat at the Osera monastery, and preferred the company of the humble to that of the pompous and pretentious. Greene may have become a wealthy man from his writings, but in his later years, he was modest in his personal living habits. Durán captures this side of him well.

Greene once said, "I am my books." But to read anthologies of commentary written by those who knew Greene personally is another way to understand and appreciate him. A.F. Cassis takes that tack in his volume, *Graham Greene: Man of Paradox*. As a self-styled "Catholic agnostic," Graham Greene indeed remains a man of paradox, very much like Miguel de Unamuno. To watch closely the present invasion of Greeneland by friend and foe alike can be depressing. But I imagine the spectacle would not have surprised Greene. He was, after all, a master at depicting the fallen state of the human condition. □

BEING GOD, TWO MINUTES A DAY

THE AMERICAN JOURNEY OF ERIC SEVAREID
Raymond A. Schroth
Steerforth Press, $28, 462 pp.

Robert Schmuhl

Almost a century ago, Henry Adams noted in a withering wisecrack that "the progress of evolution from President Washington to President Grant was alone evidence to upset Darwin." Today Adams's remark continues to have not only a wry ring but contemporary relevance to a newer American power center: broadcast journalism. What the likes of Edward R. Murrow and Eric Sevareid started with such intelligence and creativity just over fifty years ago now rests in the well-manicured hands of Dan Rather, Peter Jennings, and lesser lights.

In *The American Journey of Eric Sevareid*, Raymond A. Schroth provides the first interpretive biography of the CBS reporter-essayist, who was known (behind his back) by the nickname, "God." Schroth, a Jesuit priest and journalism professor at Loyola University in New Orleans, admirably portrays Sevareid as an outsize figure, physically and professionally, cursed with more inner demons than a mortal deity should have to bear. Paradox and contradiction haunt Schroth's pages—and his subject's life—leaving a final impression that Sevareid's success in broadcasting was remarkable, if not miraculous.

At the age of six, while growing up in Velva, North Dakota, and helping out at the weekly *Velva Journal*, Sevareid decided he wanted to be a newspaper man. Boyhood ambition endured throughout youth and maturity. For the next seventy-four years (until his death in 1992), Sevareid thought of himself as primarily a writer about topical matters. Even during his almost four-decade career with CBS, he regularly published newspaper and magazine articles as well as books, including his evocative memoir, *Not So Wild a Dream* (1946).

Commitment to the written word created one of the larger and continuing torments for Sevareid. He was never comfortable behind a microphone or in front of a camera. Gulps and gasps punctuated his delivery, and once in 1947 the CBS radio network was silent for fifteen minutes because Sevareid was unable to speak. Television, a medium dominated by images and pictures, compounded the problem, leading Schroth to conclude that Sevareid "really did not belong in broadcasting, and much of his obvious unhappiness must have come from his knowing that."

Writers, too, are by nature loners, a condition running counter to the teamwork approach required in radio and especially television. Depending on their opinion of Sevareid, colleagues found him shy or rude. The word "aloof" appears repeatedly, and its suggestion of standoffishness describes Sevareid's basic stance. Ironically, though, throughout his years at CBS, a sense of belonging to what was then the most respected network meant much to him, and he defended its news programming when others (like his idol, Murrow) saw justification for criticism.

The tension between being remote yet also engaged animated Sevareid's professional life. Sitting on the sidelines and watching the action from afar might serve a purpose sometimes, but big stories demand that a journalist be on the scene for the detailed reporting that leads to informed analysis. Wars, the business of government, political campaigns, and other stories kept Sevareid at the center of news for nearly half-a-century.

Schroth makes clear that Sevareid's work during and just after World War II shows the greatest accomplishment. Personally troubled that he wasn't serving in the military, Sevareid assumed dangerous assignments as a war correspondent. He covered the Nazi takeover of France, the Battle of Britain, and the final days of fighting in Europe. En route to China in 1943, Sevareid's plane crashed in the jungles of Burma, an area behind Japanese lines and populated by headhunters. It took a grueling ten-day march of 140 miles to reach safety. Reflecting on the experience and Sevareid's subsequent involvement in other events, Schroth notes that "his quest for news had become his quest for transcendent truth."

The radio reports, articles, and *Not So Wild a Dream* established Sevareid in the public mind as a thoughtful interpreter of current events, someone willing to look beyond the facts to offer historical or cultural meaning. His stature grew as CBS

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moved him into television, reaching its pinnacle during the fourteen years (1963–77) when he appeared almost nightly on "The CBS Evening News with Walter Cronkite." Popularity coming from celebrity brought lucrative lecture fees and book contracts, but the fame and regular exposure took its toll. Sevareid found the pressure of (in his words) "trying to be profound for two minutes every day" a constant worry that affected his health and many aspects of his life.

"At home he brooded," Schroth observes in a one-sentence paragraph, which poignantly reveals his subject's self-imposed responsibility to think through topics he discussed. The remark also captures a key reason for Sevareid's troubled private life.

Commenting so regularly and publicly evoked steady criticism and ridicule of "Eric Severalsides" and "Erect Severehead." Schroth acknowledges Sevareid's penchant for making a simple symbol represent complex reality, and his utterance of "cosmic generalizations—sometimes slipping into blather." However, the biography keeps showing how Sevareid devoted himself to becoming an "intellectual reporter" and seriously tried to use broadcast airwaves to explain America to Americans. Lapses into journalistic banality aside, Sevareid occupies a place of his own during his years as a newsman and analyst.

Throughout the book, Schroth provides context for understanding why Sevareid's work meant what it did to a nation trying to cope with problems and its new role in the world. The author also shrewdly probes the limitations of broadcasting, especially television, writing at one point: "With Sevareid's retirement, commentary died, for seven reasons." The next several paragraphs make a persuasive, albeit disheartening, case that the mania for higher ratings, vivid pictures, and raised voices rendered sober, measured observations anachronistic.

Released from what he saw as the grind of daily journalism, Sevareid spent his final years dabbling in media projects while toying with the idea of writing another memoir. In touching scenes near the end of the book, Sevareid welcomes an interview with CNN, and a year before his death signs on to do periodic commentaries for a program on public radio. But all the years in broadcasting and the scars from domestic problems sapped the energy and will required to produce another book.

The Eric Sevareid that emerges from Schroth's absorbing biography is a complex, contradictory figure, forever ill-at-ease in a calling he elevated by the authority of his words and his abiding faith in America. □

MEN FOR SOME SEASONS

OVERCOMING LAW
Richard Posner
Harvard University Press, $39.95, 578 pp.

JUDICIAL POWER AND AMERICAN CHARACTER
Robert Nagel
Oxford University Press, $29.95, 156 pp.

Daniel J. Morrissey

Thomas More observes with approval in *A Man for All Seasons* that "this country's planted thick with laws from coast to coast." That may have been the take of my profession's patron saint on his society, Renaissance England, but what are we to make of the same situation in our allegedly "over-lawyered, over-regulated" late twentieth-century America? Two contemporary jurists, Richard Posner, a federal appellate judge, and Robert Nagel, a law professor, offer thoughtful but different views.

Because of his position you might expect Judge Posner to be a votary of legal rules, but his antagonistic attitude toward the regulatory state is revealed up-front in his title. Law is something to be overcome because it generally restricts our ability to follow our preferences and desires. For Posner, a professed classic liberal individualist, the only laws that are really good are those that promote freedom, both personal and economic.

Before being appointed to the bench by President Ronald Reagan, Posner was a law professor at the University of Chicago and one of the founders of the Law and Economics school which sought the ultimate justification for legal rules in their ability to promote "wealth maximization." That mantra epitomized a happy marriage of utilitarianism and capitalism and allowed Posner and his colleagues to argue that everything should be for sale (even babies), with the less government regulation the better. To those of us inclined toward a broader perspective, the legal economists seemed to know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Without forsaking his efficiency theory, Posner now appears to have mellowed a bit and is anxious to establish a more human, multidimensional profile. He wants to also be known as a Millian liberal and a pragmatist, but without the unexplainable (to Posner) left-wing tinge that seems to infect others of that outlook.

Few jurists, even those who are not appellate judges with cases to decide and opinions to write, can demonstrate a familiarity with the wide range of legal thought displayed in this very readable collection of essays and comments. Posner's grasp of constitutional theory, feminist jurisprudence, and critical race theory is first-rate. And while he brilliantly picks at perceived weakness in those schools, he is generous at appropriate times with praise for those who are his intellectual adversaries.

But the sadness of this brilliant man is his truncated vision. True to his individualistic instincts he believes that everyone's end is ultimately found alone. His thought thus seems to lack any broader sense of justice, any understanding (found in all codes from the time of Hammurabi to the

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present) that law exists to protect the weak from the strong. For Posner, we all should be free to compete as equals, Bambi versus Godzilla.

Along those lines, Posner spins an imaginative tale about a monopolistic medieval craft guild to use as a metaphor for the "cartelized professionalism" of American law practice up until the last several decades. But he sees no problem with the rapacious commercialism that has been the contemporary result of more competitive practices among law firms. In like fashion, a market-driven pragmatism seems Posner's base-line answer to all our country's social problems. He thus appears the embodiment of Robert Nagel's fear "that conservative justices will be captive to the instrumentalist assumptions of liberal individualism."

But in other segments of his book, Posner offers hope of something larger. When he reviews the actions of judges in Nazi Germany, he acknowledges the horrific inadequacies of a legal positivism that is blind to the deeper issues of human dignity. And in a chapter fittingly titled "What am I? A Potted Plant?" he convincingly refutes judges like Robert Bork and Antonin Scalia who speak for "strict constructionism," "original intent," or whatever other fallacious theories hold that judges can avoid "making law" while interpreting it. Invoking the vision of Justice Benjamin Cardozo, Posner recognizes that judicial legislation is not only inevitable, but should be acknowledged as an appropriate instrument to achieve social ends that are responsive to human needs.

While Posner thus begins as a hard-core Reaganaut but comes out showing promise as a sensitive pragmatist, Nagel's book is a jeremiad from start to finish. His theme is the moral disintegration of American society and how the federal courts are encouraging it. Far from holding us to our higher principles, the Supreme Court (and most academic legal theorists) are, according to Nagel, reenforcing "our pleasure-seeking, our lack of civic responsibility, and our moral opportunism." Nagel presents an erudite argument and his thesis has all the righteousness of another lawyer/social philosopher of the Reformation era, John Calvin.

Unlike Calvin, Professor Nagel doesn't invoke God as the backstop of his virtuous regime, but he does have several devils, chief among them Supreme Court Justices Louis Brandeis and William Brennan. Their active constitutional vision of a confident, tolerant, and generous people has, according to Nagel, "obscured the risky and imponderable nature of our collective moral decisions" and given us a society where anything goes.

For example, in a famous case a few years ago a man who had fathered a child by a woman married to another man sued for visitation and custody. California law denied him those paternity rights and the majority of the Court agreed, refusing to countenance the results of this "adulterous affair." Justice Brennan, however, was willing to find the California law unconstitutional, when, as in this case, the father had established a loving relationship with his natural child.

Hard cases, as they say, make bad law, but Nagel doesn't seem to understand that we should be able to tell people, "Go and sin no more," without condemning the tenderest of human bonds. There's precedent for such a compassionate attitude in the understanding Jesus showed when, contrary to the established rule, he prevailed upon an angry mob to spare a woman caught in adultery.

Professor Nagel's provocative book also questions why an essentially undemocratic body like the Supreme Court should get the last word on the troubling moral issues of our day. In allowing the Court to define our character, he fears, we have given the highest power in our social life to a group that seems inclined to let us follow our worst instincts. He presumably would have us resolve those difficult issues through democratic dialogue. But anyone who thinks that elected government will necessarily protect us from our worse instincts should look at Newt Gingrich's House of Representatives. And Nagel's *bête noire*, Justice Brennan, was hardly an enemy of an expanded political process. He authored important decisions opening up the legal and political system to the poor and disenfranchised segments of our society, giving one vote equally to each person and recognizing the "brutal need" that welfare recipients have to a fair hearing before their benefits may be terminated. For such decisions, Justice Felix Frankfurter derisively dubbed Brennan and three of his Warren Court colleagues the "Jesus quartet." Some of us would consider that a compliment.

Nagel's larger point, however, is well taken. The Supreme Court has hardly proven infallible during its two-hundred-year history. As Justice Robert Jackson noted soberly: "We're not last because we're right, we're right because we're last." Yet judicial review does serve as an important check on majoritarian excesses and, when used wisely, can even call us to the deeper, more enduring values that underlie our Constitution.

And the process of judicial legislation that Posner, in his better, Cardozean moments defends allows us to maintain an uneasy equilibrium between our ideals and the realities of a very imperfect society. After all, in the passage cited at the beginning of this review, Thomas More noted that the laws of England were "man's laws, not God's," but commended them nonetheless to a young protégé willing to cut down the legal process to prosecute a man he believed to be bad. "And when the last law was down, and the Devil turned 'round on you," More asked the zealous young man, "where would you hide?"

But such a judicious acceptance of the rule of law has its limits too, a point that even More, the Lord High Chancellor of the Realm, ultimately had to make by his martyrdom. More was always, as he said, "the King's good servant, but God's first." □

REVIEWERS

ALAN WOLFE *is university professor and professor of sociology at Boston University.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

line American religion. He and I talked in detail about my idea for the book and he graciously left me with an extensive bibliography, which I used to begin building a personal library of resources. A portion of those resources is included in a bibliography of nearly forty books printed in the final pages of *Congregation*. Among the authors: Nancy Ammerman, Robert Bellah, Peter Berger, Jackson Carroll, Robert Coles, Michael Ducey, Northrop Frye, Walter Brueggemann, Stanley Hauerwas, Samuel Heilman, James Hopewell, Alasdair MacIntyre, Martin Marty, Meredith McGuire, Parker Palmer, Wade Clark Roof, David Roozen, Steve Warner, and Melvin D. Williams. Because my book is a work of narrative nonfiction, I rarely quote from any of these sources—it is my particular work as a journalist of narrative nonfiction to tell a story, not to preach, analyze, or explicate—but each of these authors and teachers informed my vision and the narrative tale of *Congregation*.

Also Mr. Elie says that I saw First Church in Windsor as "anything but a church," and he quotes me as saying the congregation "comes straight from central casting." Neither image came from my pen. I do not think that, I have never written that, I have never said that.

To report that I depict the congregation as people with "an austere dignity...modern sufferers of quiet desperation" is also untrue. To report that I portray them as "objects of Chaplinesque entertainment, latter-day Puritans who mock themselves as 'God's Frozen People,'" is also inaccurate, as Mr. Elie would have understood if he had read beyond the first few chapters. To my knowledge, the people at First Church have never described themselves as "God's Frozen People," nor would I.

Worst of all, Mr. Elie has distorted and changed facts to attack JoAnne Taylor, who serves First Church as its spiritual director. He claims she "shows up early for Sunday service to dance the Spirit into the empty church." He claims that "on the surface, her approach is that of the smug and reductionist post-Christian intellectual who aims to dismember the dead formulae of traditions." Finally, he says that JoAnne is portrayed in the book as "feeling glad that her Jaguar is in the garage of her 'middle-class' home the day the finance committee visits."

None of these statements is true; none of them appears in the book. To set the record straight, JoAnne Taylor does not own a Jaguar, nor does she "dance the Spirit" in church, and she is certainly not a "smug and reductionist post-Christian intellectual who aims to dismember the dead formulae of traditions." Mr. Elie's malicious characterization apparently is made so that he can go on to build up his straw-man case, and conclude that "JoAnne, in short, strikes the reader as the sort of person who is more interested in dismantling Christianity than in building up an explicitly Christian community." Nothing could be further from the truth.

I am saddened by this harmful review of my book and its attack against me and others in my profession. I am particularly upset by the attacks against JoAnne Taylor, a wonderful woman who has been a source of wisdom and guidance to me for a number of years, and against the people at First Church, who were and have continued to be my companions on the spiritual path during an important time in the life of my family.

To the editors and readers of *Commonweal*: I hope you will read *Congregation* for yourselves. It comes with excellent endorsements from M. Scott Peck, William McKinney, Bill McKibben, and a variety of reviewers at established newspapers from the *Hartford Courant* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* to the *Baltimore Sun*. Despite what Mr. Elie says, I do believe you will find in it a fascinating story, and one rich in the themes of American religious life.

GARY DORSEY

A conversion story

Windsor, Conn.

To the Editors: I have just finished reading Paul Elie's review of Gary Dorsey's book, *Congregation: The Journey Back to Church*. On June 11, I will be retiring after twenty-seven years as pastor of this wonderfully alive and caring congregation. That is why I had to reply to what I considered a very unfair and inaccurate review.

Certainly I don't qualify as an expert on sociology or on the higher reaches of theological thought, but I do know something about congregational life and I know, love, and admire the people of the First Church in Windsor. First Church is an imperfect and very human place, like all congregations. It is also a Christian community shaped by worship, prayer, and a genuine desire to live out Christ's message. That Mr. Elie didn't seem to catch any of this surprises and saddens me.

It is totally off the mark to liken Gary Dorsey to a journalist "on deadline" who didn't "have the inclination to undertake ongoing training in Christianity." If so, it was a five-year deadline because that was the time that elapsed from Gary's first visit to my office until the publication of the book! He wrote, rewrote, rewrote again, read a variety of books on theology and congregational life. His actual stay with us was sixteen months. There were times, in the period following, when I wondered if the book would ever come out!

The part of the review that disturbs me most is Mr. Elie's unkind and untrue characterization of our spiritual director, JoAnne Taylor. While a member of our staff, she is not a member of the congregation. She does worship regularly in the church to which she belongs. To characterize her as "the sort of person who is more interested in dismantling Christianity than in building up an explicitly Christian community" simply could not be further from the truth. JoAnne Taylor is a highly gifted, well trained spiritual director and a deeply committed Christian. She has been a blessing to us.

Mr. Elie seems to have come to his review with a whole host of prejudices and preconceptions. I sometimes wonder if he even finished the book! Perhaps he did, but he totally missed the spirit which motivated Gary Dorsey and the deeply rooted Christian faith which is evidenced by so many in the First Church community....

I'm going to miss being the pastor of this congregation. It's an exciting, growing, and increasingly diverse community, rooted in the gospel and willing to trust

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the words of the old Puritan pastor, John Robinson, who declared that "God has more light and truth to break out from his holy word." Praying, studying, and being with the people of First Church has continued to convert me, and I believe that *Congregation* is, at bottom, a conversion story. I hope you'll read it.

(REV.) VAN PARKER

Not true

West Hartford, Conn.

To the Editors: It is obvious in his review of *Congregation* that Paul Elie did not read this book with care. As the spiritual director in that church, I must protest the untruths and innuendos in his writeup. My name is really JoAnne Taylor, unlike most others in the book, who are blended characters and pseudonyms, therefore somewhat protected. If the author has left some blanks, for some reason Elie has chosen to leap in to fill those blanks with malicious, libelous comments, inferring that I am nothing less than a legitimized charlatan. Elie describes our place as a "context in which the congregants' spiritual gropings are sponsored and considered valid."

Elie describes me as "attending worship rarely, avoiding committees and daily 'scut work,' and feeling glad that her Jaguar is in the garage of her middle-class home the day the finance committee visits." I do not, have not, nor do I ever expect to own a Jaguar. Elie has confused me with another character in the book and didn't "get" that the Jaguar comment was a joke, anyway.

In another instance he has confused me with another character in the book, Joan Rockwell, the dancer. I do not "show up early for Sunday service to dance the Spirit into the empty church." The reason I am not a regular attender in Windsor is that, for a number of reasons, I have chosen to retain membership in my local parish, where I have been for thirty-one years. Because of the intimacy and confidentiality involved in my work, I feel it best to keep a little distance.

In a more detailed letter to the editors, I have outlined other responses to this vicious attack on me, including some of my credentials and a description of the way I view and conduct spiritual direction, which is really very conventional. I believe that what I do in some small way serves to strengthen the life of the church.

We at the Windsor church have an understanding that this is Gary's book, painted with some artistic license—a broad-brush sketch, describing the daily comings and goings of ordinary people in a strong, healthy church, grounded more in the gospel and faith than doctrine per se.

My husband, now retired as an Associate Conference Minister (equivalent to an auxiliary bishop) of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, feels it is the best no-nonsense, unidealistic account of life in a Protestant church since II Corinthians. We are grateful that Gary found us a hospitable place which encouraged him to return to the church.

Elie's review is more than an attack on me. Spiritual direction is only recently being recovered as a discipline within the Protestant church and is now in its fledgling stages. Mr. Elie's wanton disparagement of me and my work I consider a wound inflicted upon spiritual direction in a Protestant setting, which grieves me, for much of my spiritual nourishment has come from Roman Catholic sources.

JOANNE TAYLOR

The author responds:

In replying to Mr. Dorsey's letter (and those of Mr. Parker and Ms. Thomas), I want to acknowledge and apologize for the errors in my review essay. I also want to distinguish those errors from the analysis and interpretation that were part of my responsibilities as a reviewer.

First, the errors, which I very much regret. Mr. Dorsey is right, he did not describe the congregants of First Church as coming "straight from central casting"; those were my words, meant to introduce the quote that followed: instead, because of a typesetting error, they were run into the quote. Neither Mr. Dorsey nor any First Church member called Congregationalists "God's Frozen People." It was Mr. Dorsey's wife, Jan, who said, "Now you know why they call them 'God's Frozen People.'" It was not JoAnne Taylor who showed up early to "dance the Spirit into the empty church": it was a church member given the pseudonym of "Joan" who "danced silently and alone on Monday nights in the First Church sanctuary before our services to prepare the way for leading strangers toward the Spirit." This "Joan Rockwell" was also a member of the group JoAnne Taylor led in spiritual direction. JoAnne Taylor's name is variously spelled JoAnne and Joanne in chapter six where the dancing is described, and I mixed up the names. It was the pseudonymous "Janet Filer," organizer of the church's fund raising campaign, who said, "I guess it's a pretty good thing I hid my Jaguar in the garage," as she and the pastor sorted through the prospects. None of these superficial similarities of names excuses my error. I apologize to JoAnne Taylor for attributing the words and actions of others to her.

As for Ms. Taylor's connection to First Church, however, it comes straight from the book. Mr. Dorsey writes: "She practiced a gentle detachment that served her well leading the *dramatis personae* of

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Spirit. I noticed, for instance, that she rarely attended worship services. She distanced herself from operational jobs. She made it a rule never to discuss money or church politics or anyone's private or professional life." Mr. Dorsey's depiction in *Congregation* leaves the reader with the impression that Ms. Taylor, although a quiet but powerful influence at First Church, is not herself a churchgoer or perhaps not even a church member. It seemed, and still seems, a fair interpretation of Mr. Dorsey's text.

Perhaps this is the place to make an obvious point. I know of Ms. Taylor and her work only through the description given in *Congregation*. Mr. Dorsey and Mr. Parker are surprised that I would draw conclusions that are critical about JoAnne Taylor's work based on this account. In writing my review, I was aware that Mr. Dorsey's depiction of her may not have been complete; that's why I qualified my statements with the phrases "on the surface" and "strikes the reader."

But I also relied on extensive quotations from Ms.Taylor as reported in *Congregation*, among them her view of the church as "an institution that works against the spirit." Let me give some others. In one passage, Dorsey wrote: "Churches, [JoAnne] believed, could—and often did—damage and confuse people rather than guide them. 'Especially when you associate religion with ethics or morality, it's a real killer,' she said. 'It's a killer in the true sense of death.'" Later he quoted Ms. Taylor as follows: "I saw how 'religion' crushed the spiritual lives of adults when they were children."

I think I was right to assume that the nature of such assertions, and my critique of them, would be clear to *Commonweal*'s readers, and not only its Catholic readers. But let me elucidate that critique for, as Ms. Taylor herself observed in a letter to *Commonweal*'s editors [not published here], it has to do with our "fundamental differences in the theology of church."

For 2000 years the Christian tradition has identified the church as an institution that, far from working against the Spirit, embodies the Spirit in a unique and undeniable way. It has understood the church as guiding people more than it damages them. And it has insisted on identifying religion with ethics and morality, insisted that this brings not death but life. These are not just general claims I am making about the Christian tradition: they are claims about the authentic nature of Christianity which I subscribe to as a Christian in the Roman Catholic tradition (the tradition of this magazine) and which are affirmed in Eastern Orthodoxy and many parts of Protestant Christianity as well.

A person who would seek to challenge these cardinal points—as, in my view, does the JoAnne Taylor found in Mr. Dorsey's book—can fairly be seen as wanting to "dismember the dead formulae of tradition." And in my view of its presentation by Mr. Dorsey, Ms. Taylor's analysis of Christian institutions is reductionistic, her judgments about churchgoing Christians' lack of awareness are harsh, and her analysis of the institution-vs.-the-spirit conflict resembles those of thinkers commonly called post-Christian. There are indeed "fundamental differences" between my understanding of the theology of the church and Ms. Taylor's theology of church as presented approvingly in *Congregation* by Mr. Dorsey. It was my responsibility as a reviewer to call attention to these differences, and indeed to evaluate them.

Please note: I am not saying that the church never works against the spirit, never damages people, never inflicts wounds in childhood that arrest adult spiritual growth—or that a spiritual director should never offer such criticism of the tradition. What is at issue here is a balance in one's attitude, and the balance, as presented in Mr. Dorsey's version of Ms. Taylor, is clearly on the side of "dismantling" rather than "building up an explicitly Christian community."

As I already suggested, it is possible that Ms. Taylor has been the object, first, of what she tactfully calls Mr. Dorsey's "artistic license" and, second, of my own further isolation, compression, and emphasis of certain aspects of Mr. Dorsey's portrait. I am happy to admit that the Ms. Taylor of real life may not deserve the sharp comments I directed toward the Ms. Taylor of *Congregation*.

On to other matters: It is odd that Mr. Dorsey accuses me of not having read beyond his book's first few chapters, when I quoted or referred to passages from pages 301, 342, and 346 of the 388-page book. And it is odd that he disputes my assertion that he portrayed the congregation as "objects of Chaplinesque entertainment," when in his book he himself wrote: "If I had joined the healing group with the intent of infiltrating the mysterious culture of the church, I very quickly found its members to be a natural source of middlebrow entertainment—chaotic and Chaplinesque—despite themselves." In my view his depictions of church members in many instances throughout the book are consistent with this remark, and I will gladly point out the passages to him or anyone else.

Mr. Dorsey denies that he depicted the church members as having "an austere dignity, these latter-day sufferers of quiet desperation." That, of course, is my own interpretive description of the book, and I stand by it. Mr. Dorsey also takes issue with my analysis of the limits and pitfalls of the kind of book that was the subject of my review essay—the book in which a journalist enters into a religious tradition in order to write about it. My account of the difficulties of this genre, which opened the piece, was a general portrait, and a figurative one (Mr. Dorsey is right to say that he was not literally stranded "on the road to Damascus"). Mr. Dorsey was mentioned nowhere in it, and not every trait I identified could be applied to every writer.

I think my account of the difficulties of this sort of writing is largely accurate. Mr. Dorsey disputes my observation that these writers often find themselves "on deadline" by noting that he worked past his deadline ("my contractual agreement") by three years in order to spend nearly five years working on the project, nearly a third of that time at First Church.

That seems to me to prove my main point, which I will state differently here. Writers and publishers alike often seem to forget that nonfiction books often arise naturally out of experience already lived, rather than growing out of a proposal delivered to a publisher and then followed up with a manuscript some time later. Often it is not until years after an expe-

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rience that a writer is truly ready to write about it, and then often years and years of writing won't be enough to get it right. Mr. Dorsey is proud of the time he spent writing his book and I don't doubt the genuineness of his commitment to it. But my point is somewhat different. Because of Mr. Dorsey's necessarily limited (sixteen months) involvement with First Church, his book was primarily shaped by the logic and deadlines of journalism, not the complexities and open-ended commitments of lived Christian life.

Perhaps I was too strong in remarking on Mr. Dorsey's "semiliteracy" in religious matters. I might better have written that, however wide his reading, I do not think that he brought it adequately to bear on his account of First Church. Also, in using the word "semiliteracy" I was echoing a running theme of *Congregation*: Mr. Dorsey's struggle to articulate religious concepts and aspirations. In the book he makes the following remarks on the subject:

- "I am not a person with much insight into matters of the Spirit."
- "'I don't know how to pray!' I blurted."
- "'I can't even pray for myself. I don't know how. It's always false. Every time I close my eyes to begin, I can't find an honest word. I don't have a way to say....'"
- "'But was there any discernment of the event?' JoAnne asked. 'Discernment?' [Dorsey asked]. 'I'm sorry, that's religious lingo'" [she replied].
- "Having participated in half a dozen healing services, I was surprised to hear myself make a fumbling petition. My faulty syntax ('My wife, Jan and me, well...') didn't deter a dozen of them from coming to my side...."

These remarks are drawn from the first half of the book, but in my view they reflect its overall tenor—an account of Dorsey's struggle to become more fluent in religious language and practices.

Finally, Mr. Dorsey charges me with malice. In my review I praise him at a number of points, and made many of my criticisms against a type of writing about religion rather than against any individual writer. This was consistent with my own good intentions.

All the evidence suggests that Mr. Dorsey is a writer who works hard and means well, and it is kind of Mr. Parker and Ms. Taylor—two of the protagonists of Mr. Dorsey's book—to write saying so. But it is a hard truth of religion and literature that often good intentions are only part of the story.

PAUL ELIE

It shines

Potsdam, N.Y.

To the Editors: The William Houghton essay on work ["Apprenticeship," June 2] is a genuine *Commonweal* gem: It gains brilliance on re-reading.

DONALD PURCELL

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No admittance without children

DANIEL J. MALONEY

I force myself to admit it here, but I am a "toonhead," a fan of animated films. In particular, I am a fan of Disney's recent animated classics: *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, and *The Lion King*. I can hardly wait to see *Pocahontas*. Unlike my brother, Brian, who freely admits to spending his Saturday mornings watching cartoons (he tells me it's because of his kids), I have always been more circumspect and discreet in my cartoon-watching. After all, it is not the most adult activity.

Still, my admission is prompted by a sense—experienced and verifiable—that I am not the *only* adult who becomes mesmerized at the sight of such characters as Simba, Beast, Jasmine, or the Genie.

My first clue that adults might be enjoying these Disney films, perhaps relishing them more than even the kids, came on the afternoon I went to see *The Lion King* by myself. Since I was an adult going alone, I thought it might be better if I bought my ticket two minutes before the movie was scheduled to begin. That way I could slide into my seat unobtrusively, after the previews had already begun. And so it happened. But after settling down in my seat and overcoming a significant bout of self-consciousness, I made a sudden and startling discovery: the theater was packed, but there were *no children* in the audience.

After attending that matinee, I started asking around. One co-worker told me that she had escorted her niece to see *The Lion King*, but that it also required the companionship of several other adult friends. Another staff member told me she had taken her children to see it four or five times last summer, "so they could enjoy the air conditioning." Finally, a third member of the staff *had* to go to see the same film because his girlfriend *made* him. "Girls *like* those kinds of movies," he reported. It's too bad no one in my office had gone to see the movie of his or her own free will, or couldn't spontaneously admit to having enjoyed it!

Then I started to hear tales from younger people. Kids reported being bribed or "borrowed" to attend the films with grandparents, aunts, neighbors, and family friends. And for chaperoning these adults, the kids were cleaning up in both treats and payoffs.

But beyond these indirect admissions of adult enthusiasm there are bottom-line, objective criteria. I mean the box-office receipts, and the nominations for movie and music awards. They tell a story in both dollars and popular interest. The recent Disney animations have grossed hundreds of millions of dollars and generated multiple nominations for film and music awards. This is no mere kiddie phenomenon: Kids don't have $740 million (*The Lion King*'s box-office take) in discretionary recreational funds. Nor do they vote for the Academy Awards or the Grammies. It's the adults, stupid!

So just what is the appeal of animated films for so many adults? On a purely objective level, the films are works of technical and artistic genius. They present excellent music and lyrics, and incorporate elements of comedy, drama, and suspense. They sport good scripts and field fine voices. Their visual and auditory presentation is so powerful it can bring an audience to the point of awe.

But it is not only their objective qualities that make these films so wildly successful. I believe the most compelling element of these animated films is that they tap into the heart of the human struggle: our day-to-day relationships with one another and our tattered but unshakable belief in goodness. In these films there is little gratuitous violence, no foul language, no discomforting sex, no overt politics, and no religious controversy—staples of our daily life and most of our cinematic entertainment.

Even more important, the viewer of these films can be fairly confident that good will prevail, that by the time the final credits roll, the transformative power of love will have been affirmed. In a word, these films give us hope.

Carl Jung wrote of the *anima*—the soul—as that which enlivens us. There is a soulfulness in these animated films that replenishes us, that, in the words of *The Lion King*, makes both "kings and vagabonds believe the very best." □

"It's never too late to have a happy childhood."

Daniel J. Maloney is the dean of the graduate division of Immaculata College, Immaculata, Pennsylvania.

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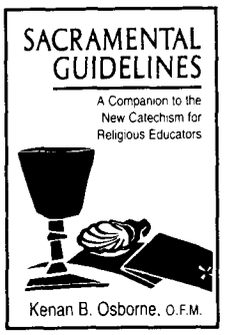

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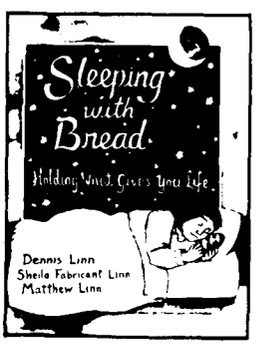

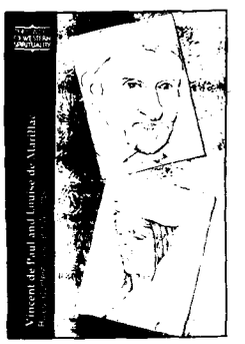

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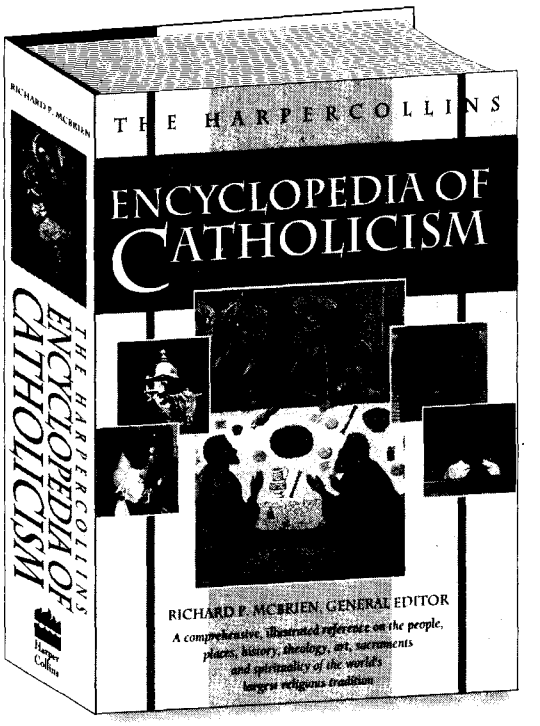
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